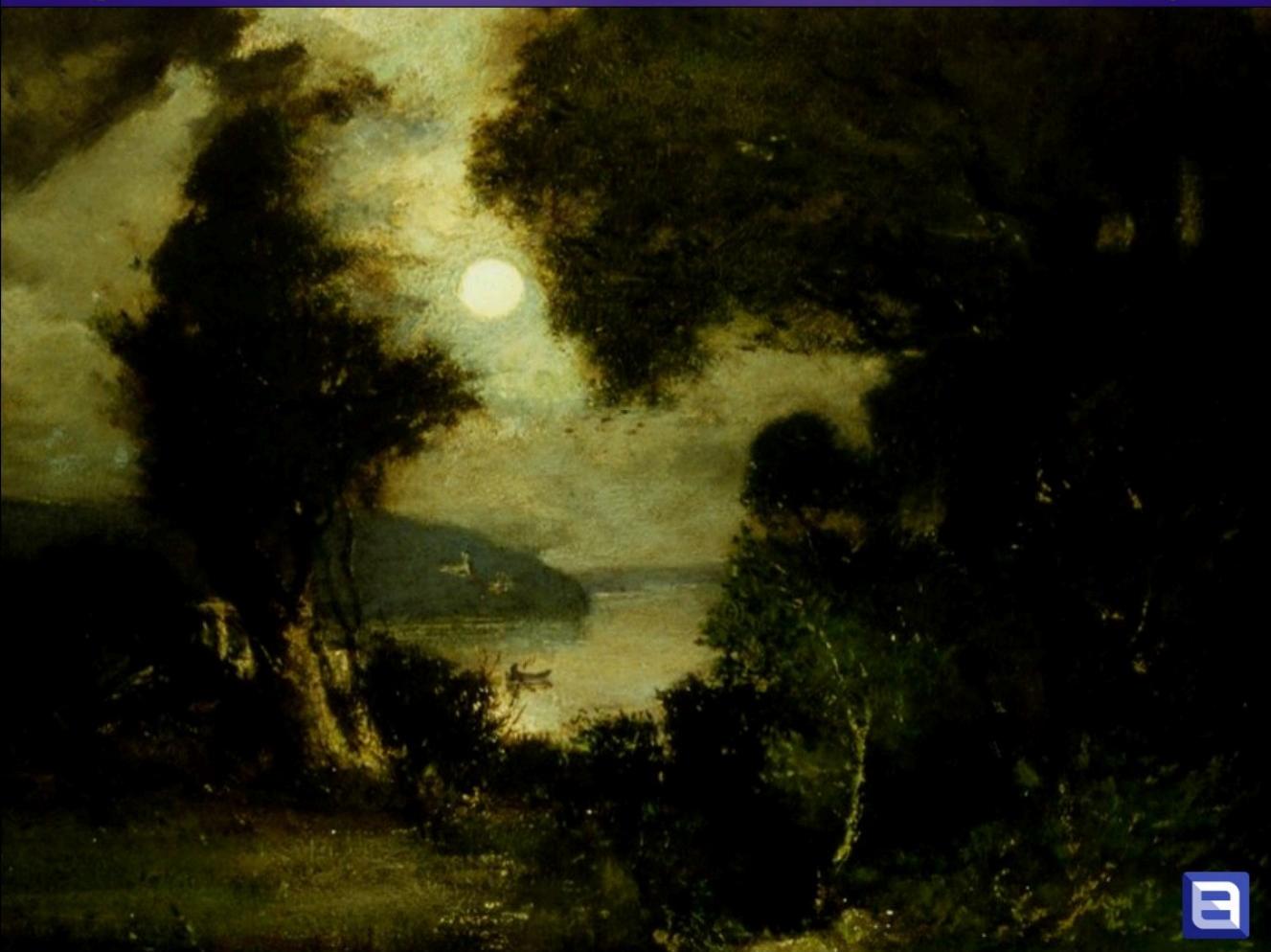# His Beautiful, Haunting Eyes

thecellarfloor

His Beautiful, Haunting Eyes

thecellarfloor

Copyright Information

Table of Contents

Summary

---

title	His Beautiful, Haunting Eyes
author	thecellarfloor
source	https://www.fanfiction.net/s/6122207/
published	July 8th, 2010
updated	October 28th, 2010
words	39,142
chapters	14
status	Complete
rating	Fiction M
tags	Angst, Books, Complete, Draco M., Fanfiction, Harry Potter, Hermione G., Romance

Description:

Draco pushed her to the wall, kissed her roughly on the lips, then punched the glass window beside her head. It smashed into pieces and the crowd who had parted for him seconds ago gasped. Hermione couldn't. She couldn't even breathe. What have you done?

Chapter 1

This is my first story. Be nice to me, please… I'm quite new to this whole story-writing thing. I'm usually more inclined to writing poems, but I've decided to 'broaden my horizons.'

Warning: This story contains EVIL!DARK!PSYCHOPATHIC!TWISTED!SADISTIC!SEXY!DRACO. No seriously. Draco's very, very, *very* evil here. And if you can't stomach that then run along to some other fic. This is not for you.

If you like dark Draco, you're going to love this…

English is my second language. So if you find any errors, please tell me.

Beta-ed by Pooja (murtagh799). Thank you.

Okay, here we go.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

The library had been empty when she had sat down to read a book.

Alice in Wonderland. The title held a certain twist, didn't it? Her mind wandered off to her childhood days when she hadn't known she was a witch. She had read numerous times to the point where she'd almost had it memorized.

It had been different from all the other books her mum had wanted her to read as a child… for Alice was not like the young women in other stories. Alice wasn't a princess, Alice didn't have a prince and Alice, no matter how many people she met, was terribly and undeniably alone. Something about that had intrigued her back then, and now it seemed as though nothing had changed after all these years…

It frightened and fascinated Hermione Granger to think that she and Alice had a lot of similarities.

Hogwarts. The place was her adventure, her rabbit hole, her cup of tea, her castle of hearts, her *home*. She often thought of it as her very own 'Wonderland.'

Seven years, she'd been living here. She had been through a lot, fighting the Final Battle against Voldemort, together with her two best friends. They had triumphed in the end.

Now the Wizarding World was finally at peace.

But things had started to change. Even though the war had ended, it had lasting effects. Her friends had started to drift away. She hadn't known why, but day by day, she could feel them inching away from her.

Or maybe it hadn't been them at all. Maybe it was just her that was drifting away…

Whatever this was, she was scared. She felt powerless to stop it. She was scared that the time would come when they'd be too far for her to reach, that they would be gone completely and she'd be left alone again.

Like Alice?

But Wonderland had only been a dream for Alice and by the time she had regained consciousness, she was safe. Hermione didn't have that luxury. *Hogwarts*— Hogwarts was real for her.

"Need anything, Malfoy?" she said with much disinterest. She was so busy with her thoughts that she hadn't even noticed him sitting on the opposite side of her table. She shifted her gaze away from the book and looked directly at him. His silver blond hair was a mess and it covered his grey eyes. His hands were on his pockets and his feet were on the table. His very presence demanded attention. He was smirking at her as usual, but there was something different about it, and not in a good way. She shuddered slightly when she met his eyes. Cold and dead, they were…

"How've you been Granger?"

"Don't ask such friendly questions." It was her turn to smirk. For the past few weeks, Malfoy had been acting rather strange. He would sit beside her or near her whenever they had the same class, look at her while they were eating in the great hall or dramatically just pop out of nowhere whenever she was alone. She had paid no mind to it. Perhaps he was just doing it to irritate her. "One would actually think you were interested in me," she added to annoy him.

For how could Draco Malfoy ever be interested in what he sees as filth?

Suddenly, he shifted in his current position and leaned towards her. She pressed her back against her chair in alarm, holding her wand inside the pocket of her robes in case he tried anything funny.

"And if I was?" He leaned in further, enjoying her obvious discomfort.

"What?" The statement had caught her completely off guard. Malfoy's smirk widened. Then suddenly he grabbed her chin and made her look at him. She shivered as she felt his hand on her skin. He looked like he was perplexed.

"Your eyes, Granger. They're so open, so innocent and honest," he said absentmindedly, studying her. He was slowly inching towards her, as if he was about to kiss her. She was so stunned by his uncharacteristic behaviour that she couldn't pull away. He was speaking in riddles. What the bloody hell was he talking about?

"W-what do you—what the bloody hell are you talking about?"

"You should learn to cover them." He was so close; she could feel his breath on her skin. "They're so… *tempting*."

She shivered at his words but she would never admit to herself that she felt afraid. She was too shocked to say anything. She felt her mouth go dry. What did he mean by tempting? What was wrong with him?

"You can't just— I-I—" she stuttered. Finally, she managed to push him away from her body. She ungracefully stood up, grabbing her books and shoving them messily in her bag.

Malfoy had clearly lost his mind and she had a bad feeling about it. She turned to leave.

"McGonagall wanted something."

She stopped on her tracks. She looked back at him, pissed that he held something against her. They stared at each other for quite some time. Her instincts were telling her to run now— to safety— but she refused to be intimidated.

"Well?" she told him impatiently. "What is it?"

He sneered and pushed the chair where she sat a while ago with his feet. "Sit."

She cursed under her breath and grudgingly sat down again, keeping the chair as far away from the table as possible. He only chuckled.

"I'm not going to murder you, love. I just want to talk."

"Don't call me that," she said, seething. "I do not want to talk to you. I do not want to be near you. I do not want anything to do with you. Now please tell me what McGonagall wanted and let me leave."

"Granger, Granger, Granger," he addressed her like she was a child and it unnerved her. "That's no way to talk to a Malfoy. You should know by now that this is your own fault anyway."

"Fault? What's my fault?"

"This." He waved his hands like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

She stared at him questioningly. He smirked again. "You really have no idea?"

"No. Please enlighten me."

"*No*," he said, suddenly more enthusiastic. It was downright creepy. "You're cluelessness makes it all the more thrilling." He stood and turned to leave.

Her *what?*

"What was Professor McGonagall trying to say to me?" she called out to him.

He only graced her with one last smirk and continued on his way.

There wasn't really any message from McGonagall, was there?

Hermione cursed under her breath and stopped herself from hexing him right then and there.

"What's going on?" she asked the people in front of her. A huge crowd gathered in the corridors. The students were excited over something. She couldn't see past their heads, but she knew she had to stop whatever was happening. It was her job as Head Girl after all.

"Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini are having a fight!" said an overly excited first year she did not know. Hermione pursed her lips. How dare they cause such a commotion? She tried to go through the group of students but nothing seemed to work and she was stuck at the back of

the crowd. Annoyed, she moved to grab her wand but seconds later, the people started to part in front of her, probably to give way to someone.

Draco Malfoy walked pass the crowd with a very angry look on his face. They all looked amazed and scared of him at the same time. Whispers could be heard all around him. He didn't take notice of any of it though. His lip was bleeding and he had a terrible bruise on the side of his head. His hair was dishevelled and he looked as if he wanted to kill someone, although he probably had done just that seconds ago.

She dreaded to think what became of Zabini.

She saw him lying like a corpse a few feet behind Malfoy. No one had dared to go near him in case Malfoy had decided to come back. With all the Gryffindor bravery she could muster, Hermione Granger stayed where she was. She didn't give way to him like the crowd had done, didn't keep her distance. She was determined to give him a piece of her mind and possibly detention. She was face-to-face with Malfoy now, and the murderous look on his face was not helping her courage at all.

She was about to say something when Malfoy finally caught sight of her. He lunged at her so fast, she didn't have time to react. He pushed her to the wall hard, *kissed her roughly on the lips,* and then punched the glass window beside her head. It smashed into pieces and the crowd that parted for him seconds ago, gasped.

But Hermione couldn't gasp. She couldn't even breathe.

What have you done? Her thoughts screamed wildly. With one last lingering look at her, he walked away without so much of a scratch on his hand to show for his violent activities.

Everyone was quiet. They were all too shocked at what they had just witnessed.

She was shaking with anger now, her hands balled into fists. "Get back to your dorms! All of you!" she yelled. Everyone scrambled on their feet and left.

With a wave of her wand, the glass window was returned to its original condition. She walked towards the unconscious form of Blaise Zabini.

———————

"I told you Harry, I think he's after me," she tried to explain to her friends as they sat in the Great Hall. She sat there staring down at her soup, playing with it with her spoon. She had lost her appetite the moment Malfoy had started burning holes in the back of her head with his eyes.

"Who? Malfoy?" Harry said with a slight frown. "He's mental, Hermione. He's probably just messing with you."

"Merlin, he's right Hermione," said Ron while he filled his plate with enough food to feed a whole army. "I don't think that git would want to date someone like you."

"Someone like me?" she repeated angrily, her voice starting to rise. "And what do you mean by that, Ronald?"

"I reckon he's into a more beautiful ty—" His eyes suddenly widened when he realized what he was just about to say. Harry glared at him. Hermione banged her palms on the table and stood up.

"I'll see you guys later," she said icily. She knew what they were on about. They just couldn't believe the idea that anyone would show even the slightest bit of interest on her. They hadn't heard yet about the *kiss* (Merlin, she could vomit just by saying it), and she wasn't planning on telling them either. Even if they did eventually hear about it, she would deny it. She walked away from them and didn't look back.

She could feel everyone's eyes on her. She could hear their whispers.

And she knew what they were talking about.

She cursed under her breath and walked angrily towards the Hospital Wing. Zabini was lying in one of the beds, a book in his hands. He didn't look up when she sat beside his bed.

For a moment they were silent. She didn't speak, thoughts still lingering on the past events. Draco Malfoy was not stupid. He knew what would have happened as a result of his actions. He knew that rumours would spread. He knew that this could possibly stain his pureblood name.

So why did he still do it?

Of course with the war over, blood didn't matter anymore. But still… she couldn't help but feel uneasy. It was as if something very bad was about to happen.

"Yes?" Blaise Zabini said, while still reading his book. It was only then that she noticed that she had been mumbling to herself.

"My apologies," she responded, bitterly. She shoved the uneasy thoughts aside and gave him a warm smile. "How're you feeling?"

"Better," he said, finally closing his book and turning to look at her. Her relationship with Blaise had been a civil one since the year had started. He was Head Boy and thankfully, he was willing to put their differences aside to work together. Even though he was a Slytherin, she respected him, and he respected her.

A lot of people even said they would make a great couple.

"I—er, wanted to ask you something," she said quietly, unsure if she wanted to continue.

"Yes, of course," he said. "Anything."

"What happened between you and Malfoy?"

"Anything but that," he replied grimly, his black orbs gazing at her brown ones. She frowned.

"Why?" she looked at him questioningly. "Is it that much of a secret?"

"No, I'm just worried of the outcome."

"You're scared of him, you mean?" she snapped back. She couldn't understand how anyone as clever as Blaise be scared of someone like Malfoy. He wasn't *that*dangerous, was

he?

Was he?

He turned his gaze away from her and sighed. "Draco is more evil and dangerous than what you give him credit for."

"Is he?" she asked, disbelief marring her features.

"Yes Granger, he is," he said seriously. He closed his eyes for a moment, as if thinking of what to say next. "You don't even know the half of it. I'm warning you now, as your— *acquaintance*. Be careful. He's after you—"

"Blaise," she heard a cold familiar voice behind her before Blaise could even finish his sentence. She felt herself shiver as Malfoy wrapped his arm around her waist. Their bodies pressed against each other, and for a moment Hermione felt the sinking feeling of fear again. She brushed it off. He stood arrogant and tall, a smirk plastered to his face. "How are you?"

She tried to push him off but he wouldn't budge. He was too strong. He had the nerve to come here when it was his fault Blaise was in an infirmary bed. "Have you forgotten who did this to him?" she told him angrily. Blaise glared at her. She mouthed a 'what?'

"Granger was just about to leave," Blaise said, with a hint of warning in his voice. He was trying to tell her to run for her life but being the stubborn girl that she was, she brushed it off.

"Brilliant, I'll come with her then," Malfoy said, smirk never leaving his face. Blaise's eyes widened.

"I think she can manage on her own, Draco," he muttered grimly. "Besides, didn't you come here to talk to me?"

"I have nothing to say to you," Malfoy said coldly. "I was just checking to see if you were still alive. Unfortunately, you are." He grabbed her hand and pulled her roughly as he walked to the door.

"Hey! What are you—Let go Malfoy!"

Blaise Zabini shook his head. Granger was in for it now.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Sooooo. How was it? Should I continue? :)

Chapter 2

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Draco was pulling her so hard; she couldn't get away from him. He had one large hand wrapped around both of her wrists. She couldn't believe how strong he was. She felt helpless as he shoved her to an empty classroom and locked the door. Once he let go, she wasted no time and grabbed her wand, aiming it at his chest.

He merely stood there, unfazed.

"I don't know what you're up to, Malfoy, but you have to stop right now." She felt her voice rising in anger and irritation. "You think you can just beat someone up and then act as if nothing happened? You think you can get away with this? I don't know why Blaise isn't talking. I reckon you have something against him, but everyone else who witnessed you bloody pound him? That's just ridiculous! They can't all be scared of you! You— you did something!"

She could feel her anger getting the best of her. So, she let it all out. It had been bottled up inside her mind for quite some time now. When he didn't say respond, she continued. "Then what? You *snog* me in front of everybody! Merlin what's wrong with you!"

"Are you done?" he asked in a bored voice.

The words died in her throat. The effect he had on her was frightening. What was it with him that made her so unsure of herself?

One sentence from him had been enough to stun her to silence.

"You don't know anything, love," he said slowly, as if he was talking to a child again, someone who wouldn't understand.

She felt the rage bubble in her once again.

"Stop talking to me like I'm a child, Malfoy!" She was poking her wand at his chest now, threatening him. He didn't even wince. "I know well enough not to tolerate your actions!"

"Which is stupid if you ask me," he drawled lazily.

"Well no one's asking, you sodding—"

"Are you, Granger?" he interrupted. He took a step forward and she took two steps back. His expression changed from boredom to utter amusement, and he was looking at her like she was a piece of fresh meat. "*Scared*, I mean."

"No," she said almost automatically. She would never admit to him that she was scared. However, her voice had cracked slightly and she unconsciously backed another step.

No, indeed.

Suddenly, he grabbed her by the shoulders and shoved her roughly against the door. She groaned in pain. He slammed his left hand loudly beside her head, making her jump. His right hand stayed limp against his side. It had happened so fast that she hadn't had time to react. She saw her wand rolling on the floor a foot or so away from her. The panic started sinking in completely now. She tried to push him away but he slammed her roughly against the door again, only harder this time.

"You see, you have got to stop doing this, Granger," he said, one cold hand brushing her cheek. She flinched at the sudden contact. "You can't be so *vulnerable* all the time."

There was something in his eyes; she did not know what it was. It was hiding behind the pools of grey but she saw it. It looked so strong and intense that even with his straight face it was still visible.

Draco Malfoy had beautiful, haunting eyes.

"What if I was a bad person?" he whispered teasingly in her ear. His hands moved from her cheek to her shoulder, her elbow to her hand, sending shivers down her spine. She couldn't stop herself from trembling. "What if I was actually a *murderer*, hmm?"

When he started pulling at her left hand and sliding the sleeve of her robe off of her wrist, she desperately felt the urge to get away from him.

"Do you even know what they're saying about us?" he said while examining her wrist. She winced at the word 'us.' There is no '*us*', she wanted to say. 'They said we were having this secret love affair. Can you believe it? But Zabini wanted to interfere, so I got rid of him.' He sniggered, never letting go of her hand. He was massaging it lightly with his thumb. His skin felt cold against hers. "And then they thought I didn't want anyone near you so I snogged you."

"N-no," she whimpered. She had heard enough. She was trying so hard not to cry now. She pushed him again, but he held her wrist tighter. He wasn't even looking at her. Her wrist was far more interesting to him, apparently. Something was terribly wrong with him. She had to get away from him.

Now.

"People have such wild imaginations. Although I don't really blame them considering it really did look like we were fighting over you."

"Stop it," she said again. She was relieved that he hadn't seen a few tears escape her eyes.

"Why so upset? I haven't even told you the best part! They thought we were having sex every night at the head dor—"

"I said stop!" she yelled, but he stubbornly ignored her and continued his verbal onslaught.

"*At the head dormitories.* They even thought you weren't your usual quite, prudish self whenever we're fucki—"

The loud sound of her palm colliding with his cheek stopped him before he could even finish. Her breaths were ragged and her eyes were blurred from all the tears. She wiped them

roughly with the back of her hand. She couldn't bring herself to look at him.

What happened to him? He wasn't like this before… so empty, so *cold*.

Hermione started to understand what Blaise had been trying to tell her. She didn't know him. She didn't know Draco Malfoy at all.

Balling her hands to fists, she waited. Surely he would run away now, like he had done when she'd slapped him a few years ago during their third year.

A couple of minutes had passed, but it felt like hours for her. He was still there.

Finally she raised her head. She almost screamed when she saw him *smirking* at her again.

"Let me go. *Now,*" she said furiously. She couldn't stop herself from shaking, not out of fear, but out of anger now. Her tears threatened to escape again.

Her eyes never left his, and to her surprise, he stepped away from her.

"As you wish, *Hermione.*"

Her name sounded sickly sweet coming from his lips. She didn't like it. She grabbed her wand quickly and left.

"I'll have you in the end," he added in a whisper.

But she was already out the door.

———————————

It had already been a day since he had been released from the Hospital Wing.

His body was still a bit sore but he paid no mind to it. It would all heal with rest, anyway. Draco had almost killed him, he was lucky to be alive. He was scared of him and with good reason. He hadn't been lying to Hermione when he'd told her that Draco Malfoy was dangerous.

"Where's Hermione?" he heard someone say loudly. Weasley and Potter had entered the head common room and were now facing him. Blaise was sitting on a couch by the fire, reading a book. Almost instantly, the room was filled with tension. The nerve of them, barging in like this. How disgusting.

"Hermione!" he called out, eyeing the two bloody Gryffindors with disgust. "You have unwanted guests!"

"I'll be down in a minute!" they heard her say.

Then silence.

Potter was standing near the doorway that led to Granger's room. He looked like he was trying to remain calm, though it obviously wasn't working. Weasley was pacing around and muttering curses under his breath, his face was almost as red as his hair.

"Since when did you start calling her Hermione?" said Potter, finally, with a slight tone of irritation in his voice. He made it sound like Blaise didn't *deserve* to call her by her given name.

"It's called a truce, Potter," he replied icily.

Blaise was not like Malfoy. He didn't provoke or threaten, no. He didn't hex people just because he felt like it or pound someone for telling him he was going too far. He preferred blending in with the background, observing his surroundings, and keeping quiet.

He preferred a more boring life.

He was not really boring in actuality… he just chose to be.

Potter, however, was one person who always got under his skin. Blaise couldn't control his anger when he was around, not after what he had done to his mother. Blaise wanted him dead.

"He snogged her," Weasley said angrily over and over again, not bothering to look at both of them. "He bloody snogged her… Fucking sexual harassment…"

"I take it you had something to do with this?" Potter said accusingly. "You are his best mate after all."

"Slytherins don't have friends, you moron. Don't compare us to your pathetic house," he retorted. Sure, he was quiet and reserved but it was not wise to provoke him. He hated Potter with a passion.

Potter was about to say something when they heard Hermione's footsteps. She appeared seconds later, wearing muggle clothing as usual. Her face fell at the sight of Potter and Weasley.

"He bloody snogged you!" Weasley yelled. Potter nodded. "How could you not tell us? This is a serious offense. Bloody hell Hermi—"

She looked at Blaise for help but he didn't say anything. He just shrugged. *Interesting.* Why didn't she want to tell her boys? Was she embarrassed?

"What are you talking about?" she suddenly blurted out.

"Lavender told me," Weasley said irritably. "Is it true, then? Tell us! Tell us and we'll—"

"Told you what exactly?" She was panicking now. She never was a good liar.

"That the ferret bloody harrassed you in public!" Potter said, finally cracking. "He's bad news Hermione! He *is* after you, isn't he! That's why you told us yesterday—"

"Draco didn't snog her." Blaise interrupted. Seeing Granger so helpless was painful to watch. He had to at least do something to make it up to her after she had saved his life.

"Stay out of this," growled Potter.

"H-he's right, Harry."

"What! You're taking his side?"

"N-no! I'm just! It's—" Hermione muttered nervously. "It's not true."

"It isn't?" Weasley said, grabbing her shoulders roughly. "It really isn't?"

She managed to give a stiff, nervous laugh.

"Of course not. Come on you two, this is Malfoy we're talking about. I just gave him detention and he ran off," she explained, her voice cracking a little in her nervousness.

Relief flashed in Weasley's eyes and instantly he was convinced. He let go of her and brushed his hair with his hand. "Merlin, that's a relief. Lavender said she heard it from the Ravenclaws, but I guess it was all a rumour, huh?"

He tapped Potter by the shoulder. "Let's go Harry."

Potter was still staring at Hermione incredulously. He looked like he wanted to say something, but he shut his mouth.

Hermione sighed in relief when the two of them left the common room. She sprawled wearily at the couch beside him.

"Don't celebrate yet," Blaise said. "Potter wasn't convinced."

He was heading back to the castle now. There were snowflakes all over his hair and coat. He could see his breath and his hands were inside the pockets of his coat. The whole place was covered with white sheets of snow: the trees and the little Hogsmeade shops. He had never liked the snow. He could never understand how something so pretty and white be so… so lacking. He quickly mouthed a warming charm over his body.

It did nothing to ease the cold.

Hogwarts. He could already see its tip from where he was standing. The school reeked of annoying, shallow students and teachers who were oblivious to the fate that awaited them all. It reeked of fear and despair for the upcoming war… but that didn't seem to bother him.

He still saw it as his home.

As he neared a curve in the path, he saw someone lying on the snow. He caught a glimpse of bushy brown hair and smirked.

"Mudblood," he said, arrogantly, standing just beside her position on the ground and looking down. She looked up at the sound of his voice, waved her hands frantically at the snow, and then laughed loudly for no apparent reason. "Have you gone mad?"

"Say whatever you want, Malfoy." She smirked, while standing up and dusting herself off. "You can't do anything to dampen my mood today."

"What are you doing?" She was drawing a circle on the snow with her finger now… right on top of this — this — what was it?

"What is it?"

"It's a snow angel, silly." She grinned. 'See that's the head.' She pointed. "That's the body and the halo."

He looked at the said 'snow angel' and raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"Come on, I'll teach you," she said, tugging at his arm and grabbing his hand.

Strange. She would never do something like this on a normal day. She would be disgusted at the mere sight of him and vice versa.

Her hand too, he was shocked to find it so warm.

He let her drag him to the ground, he didn't know why but he followed her instructions. It was probably because Granger was so alluring today. Her face lit up every time she smiled and there was something about her that was so fascinating. Why was she so happy?

"And that is how you make a snow angel," she said smugly. She stood up and offered her hand. He took it.

He frowned when he saw his. It was deformed and it looked nothing like an angel. It looked like a monster.

"Mine looks horrible," he said with slight irritation, although his face never gave anything away.

"Don't be so bitter," she laughed, smacking him on the arm playfully. "Here, I'll fix it for you."

She lay down again and repeated her actions, only this time, she was on top of his—snow monster.

"There," she said, standing up and dusting herself off for the third time. She looked at him, brown eyes filled with mirth. He felt something stir in his stomach. "Now it's perfect."

He looked at his snow monster. It was still somewhat deformed but it didn't look so bad anymore.

And it was perfect.

He smiled for the first time that year.

Snow's not so bad after all.

Draco smiled at the memory. He looked again at the centaur in front of him. It was on the ground, screaming, clawing, writhing in pain

And he hadn't even lifted a finger yet.

"I'll have you in the end."

------

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thank you for all the reviews. I didn't expect to get this many on my first story. I want to hug you all. I haven't written an ending yet but I already have a vague idea…

I'm not going to give anything away though. I'm going to let the story speak for itself. I love you. Peace out.

Chapter 3

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

The thought came gently and stealthily, and it seemed long before it attained full appreciation; but just as my spirit came at length properly to feel and entertain it, the figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me; the tall candles sank into nothingness; their flames went out utterly—

"You weren't at the game."

She heard a voice that quickly snapped her out of her daydream from the depths of "The Pit and the Pendulum". Immediately, she turned to gaze at the face of a very exhausted, very disheveled, and very *handsome* looking Draco Malfoy right across her table, *again*.

He had just came from the game, she noticed, because he was still wearing his Quidditich uniform and his broom was on the table. There was an aura of gloom around him… or maybe that was just her. A group of girls were hiding from behind the bookshelves a few feet away from them, giggling and staring at his back. Hermione glared at his fan club and then at him. She continued to read.

…the blackness of darkness supervened; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rush—

"Oh, come on Granger, you're still mad?"

…rushing descent as of the soul into Hades. Then silence, and stillness, night were the universe. I had swooned; but still will not say—

"I thought you didn't care about what other people thought of you," he said leisurely.

"Shh." She placed a finger on her lips, telling him to keep quiet. He rolled his eyes.

She ignored him and returned to her book again. This week had been a terrible one for Hermione. Her fellow Gryffindors had thought she was a traitor (despite Harry and Ron's explanation). The Hufflepuffs had become scared of her. The Ravenclaws had said she was a hypocrite. The Slytherins thought her a whore.

Not that she cared what the Slytherins thought about her anyways.

Only the teachers seemed to have approved of this *imaginary* relationship. "Interhouse Unity!" they had all said.

To make matters worse, she had been bombarded with rubbish questions about Draco Malfoy and *shagging* everywhere she had went.

It was revolting.

She opted to ignore him. Perhaps he would go away if she tried hard enough.

…that all of consciousness was lost. What of it there remained I will not attempt to define, or even to describe; yet —

Suddenly, she felt a hand grab her wrist.

"Malfoy!" she said loudly, struggling against his hold. She felt a cold, round metal object touch the palm of her hand.

The Golden Snitch.

"You won?" She was looking at him now, forgetting that she was supposed to ignore him. He smirked triumphantly. And then he nodded.

"Didn't think I could do it, did you?" he said, crossing his hands and leaning back into his chair.

"Congratulations then," she told him. She handed it back to him, but he only held it to her hand gently.

He looked as if he enjoyed the warmth of her skin.

"Keep it."

"Why?"

"My peace offering," he said. Hermione blinked several times to make sure she wasn't dreaming. Since when did Draco Malfoy ever apologize? And to a mudblood, no less. She never thought she'd see the day. This was the first game of the year and he was willing to give away the first snitch he'd caught just so she would forgive him?

It must've been hard for him.

She gazed at him for a long time, studying his features. There was still something very wrong with his eyes, like he was scheming… lying… but she kept hearing the voice of Albus Dumbledore echo in her head. Everyone deserves a second chance.

Damn, conscience.

She placed the snitch in her pocket, looked back at the book she was reading and then sighed in defeat.

Everyone deserves a second chance.

"Alright. I forgive you."

All was not lost.

———————————————

"There have been several mysterious killings of centaurs in the Forbidden Forest. I just want to remind everyone that entering the Forbidden Forest is prohibited. We only care for your safety," McGonagall said, her voice echoing in the quiet of the Great Hall. "Violation of the rules will lead to severe consequences."

A small smirk suddenly graced his handsome features.

This was too *easy*. That Golden Snitch thing had all been an act. Draco never apologized. Hermione had been an exception. She was*special*. He had already been sure Hermione was going to forgive him. Hermione wasn't capable of hatred even if she'd tried. She was the trusting and forgiving type and she thought everybody deserved a second chance.

He was going to use that to his advantage.

Just like what he had done with Voldemort and Albus Dumbledore.

"Did you have something to do with this?" Blaise whispered accusingly. "Did you kill those centaurs?"

"Of course not," he said with an expressionless face. But the boy knew him too well. He knew he had been lying. Draco didn't care.

Let them hate so long as they fear.

The Light side and the Dark side of the Final Battle had been unfamiliar to him. He had acknowledged no sides. He only knew one side, *his side*. However, he had used both sides to gain more power. He had been a spy for the Light side and learned Occlumency and Potions from Snape, ordered by Dumbledore himself. He had been a valued Death Eater for the Dark side and learned Dark arts from Voldemort himself.

But the bastard had noticed his potential and had never let him out of his sight.

He had noticed Draco's *skill* in the Dark Arts.

So he had bestowed upon Draco the most wanted gift of many.

…To be his heir.

"Where's Granger?" he asked loudly, not caring who heard him. A few Slytherin girls looked at him and frowned.

"She's doing her Potions essay back at the dorm," Blaise replied.

Draco had not wanted to be Voldemort's heir. He had not wanted to take orders from anyone. Draco was his own master, after all… but still, he had accepted. He had predicted that Voldemort would die in the end.

The good thing about being the Dark Lord's heir was the unbelievable knowledge that came along with the position. Voldemort had taught Draco *everything* he knew, every skill, every technique, every secret. The Death Eaters hadn't known a thing, but Draco's sudden change in power had made them suspicious.

When Potter had finally killed Voldemort, Snape had somehow explained to the-boy-who-lived that Draco had been a spy for the Order and he had gotten off easily.

And now he was still alive, more powerful and dangerous than ever.

Voldemort had not been weak. He had just been missing something and that had caused his downfall. Draco wouldn't make that mistake. He would not be crushed so easily.

He wouldn't be crushed at all.

"You were right, Zabini," he said as he drank water from his goblet. "Maybe forcing the crest is indeed going too far."

"Yes, it took you long enough to realize that. She's not a toy, Draco. She has—"

"Are you going to help me or not?"

Blaise pondered for a moment, gazing at him.

"What's in it for me?"

"Think of it this way," Draco hissed. "I won't kill you when I rule the world."

Blaise snorted, but Draco could still see the slightest tinge of fear in his eyes. Blaise knew well not to cross him again. *Smart boy*.

"I'm not doing this for you Draco," he said finally. "I want Potter gone. Kill him if you must."

"Done."

He had to separate his Princess from her precious Gryffindor bodyguards. She was most vulnerable when she was alone.

Divide and conquer.

That was the plan.

"So they're coming here on the same day as the convention?" she said sadly.

Harry and Ron nodded. They had already promised her they would accompany her to this book convention to be held at Beauxbatons this Friday. Professor McGonagall had told her a month ago that she and Blaise had to represent Hogwarts. They were allowed to bring two friends with them.

She had asked Harry and Ron of course.

"It's only going to happen once in the history of Hogwarts," said Harry while trying to hide his excitement.

"But we'll still go to the convention if you want us to," Ron added, half-heartedly. She knew they were trying to sway her into letting them stay here instead of going to the book convention. Even though they had promised her no matter what happened, they'd all go.

How easily they could replace her with Quidditch.

She sighed. This was what she'd been talking about. They were drifting away…

"No… it's okay," Hermione said stiffly. "It would be selfish of me to force you to go with me…"

They both grinned enthusiastically and hugged her tightly. "Thanks, Hermione."

She mouthed goodnight and headed back to the head dorm.

"Bloody Brilliant!" she heard Ron's voice as soon as she rounded a corner. "The Chudley Cannons! On Friday! In Hogwarts! I'd be dead before I'd miss that to go to some boring book convention."

Her knuckles turned white as she climbed the staircases. She had only asked them to do one thing for her this year, and even then they would willingly ditch her to do something else.

She knew she was being whiny and selfish but she couldn't help it. *It hurts.*

She could feel her tears trying to escape her eyes but she held them back. She wouldn't cry now. Not when she knew this would have happened anyways.

Not when she was already used to being so alone.

"Granger." Malfoy had just exited the Head dorm. He had smirked when he saw her. His hands were tucked in his pockets again. She had stopped walking but he continued, stopping only when he was right beside her.

"See you on Friday, love," he said, before walking away.

"BLAISE!"

"You saw Draco outside," the Head Boy muttered, rolling his eyes. He was sitting by the fire again. She wanted to kill him. "I'm sorry, but I asked him. Do you know how hard it is to find a Slytherin who loves books?"

"Yes, but—"

"Potter and Weasley will have to be civil to him," he interrupted as-a-matter-of-fact.

At the mention of their names her face fell and she was quiet. Blaise turned to look at her with his dark eyes.

"What?" he asked, noticing the sudden change in atmosphere.

"They're—" He could see her eyes watering. She turned her back on him so he wouldn't see her face "—not coming."

"Oh…" he said awkwardly, not knowing how to handle the situation. "Why?"

"The Chuckly Canyons or whatever," she said. Blaise knew she was crying now.

He almost laughed at the mention of 'Chuckly Canyons' but he had stopped himself. He really did feel bad for Hermione.

"I'm going to my room," she said quietly. "I don't care if Malfoy comes."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Poor Hermione…

but don't worry, she's a fighter.

If you have the time, you might want to read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" [[I used it in this chapter, it's a good read :)]]

Thanks for reading and reviewing my story.

Chapter 4

Something wasn't right. He felt a horrible feeling deep inside his gut, a feeling that had a slight resemblance to the pain in his scar.

"Can you believe this, Harry?" Ron said excitedly as they neared the Quidditch field. The Chudley Cannons were in Hogwarts today and they were going to teach all the Hogwarts Quidditch teams a few tricks and pointers on Quidditch.

It was one of the perks of the upcoming Hogwarts Sports Festival next week. Normally, Hogwarts never host these kind of events but the teachers had felt it right to host events that would help the students recover from the awful memories of the past War.

The Chudley Cannons stood in the center of the Quidditch field, bright orange robes moving with the wind. Their logo of two black C's and a speeding cannonball could be seen from where they were standing.

Harry walked in front together with Ron while the other members of the Gryffindor Quidditch team walked right behind them. All of them were anxious and excited… all except Harry though.

It wasn't that he wasn't excited… He just couldn't seem to shake the bad feeling off.

"It looks like the other teams beat us here first." He heard Ginny say.

The other teams were already there. They could see the Members of Chudley Cannons splitting into pairs, one pair led each team.

The remaining three members approached them.

Ron suddenly looked very green.

"Team Gryffindor!" said the man in the middle, smiling brightly at them.

He had dark brown hair and pointy nose. He was very tall, and he was held his broom in his hand. "My name's Galvin Gudgeon, Chuddley Cannons seeker. This is, Joey Jenkins, beater and Dragomir Gorgovitch, chaser."

He pointed at the other two beside him.

"It's a pleasure to work with you all," the man called Joey said, smiling at them as well. The other man remained quiet behind the two.

"We're going to be teaching you a few techniques at flying and handling your brooms—"

Harry tuned Galvin out as soon as he heard a loud voice from the team beside them, the Slytherins.

"Slytherin Quidditch Captain?" the man from Chudley Cannons asked.

"He's not here," said one of the Slytherin players.

Harry's eyes widened. His heart raced as his mind processed what he'd just heard.

"Ah, you must be the famous Harry Potter, the Gryffindor Quidditch Captain. I must say I'm—" Galvin had started to say, but Harry was too frantic to pay attention to him now.

"Malfoy!" Harry yelled hysterically, with a look of panic in his face as he walked towards the Slytherins. He grabbed a boy, Nott, by the collar roughly. The boy stared at his murderous face in panic. "Where's Malfoy?"

The Gryffindors and Slytherins (and also the members of the Chudley Cannons) looked at him as if he'd gone mad.

"What are you on about Harry? Have you lost it?" Ron said but Harry ignored him. He stared at Nott again.

"Where is he?"

"H-he's in Beauxbatons," Nott said faintly. "Said something about a—"

Harry didn't give him time to finish.

He stormed off the Quidditch field, Ron in tow.

"How can you let this happen!" he yelled angrily at McGonagall. They had entered her office minutes ago and told her about Hermione going to Beauxbatons with Malfoy and Zabini. His palms were flat on her desk and he was glaring daggers at her.

"I don't understand what the problem is Mr. Potter," she replied calmly, adjusting the rim of her glasses.

"What? That's all you're going to say Professor?" Harry yelled again. "After you let her go alone with those—those—Slytherins!"

Ron nodded but he didn't say anything. He knew well enough not to talk whenever Harry was angry.

"Calm down Mr. Potter," said Professor McGonagall. Her eyes never left his. He felt himself grow angrier at her impassiveness with the whole situation.

"I can't calm down when she's out there with them!"

"She is not in any danger," she replied, her voice as stern as ever. Harry could tell she was starting to get irritated with him. "I told them they could choose who they had wanted to bring. Mr. Zabini chose Mr. Malfoy, and Ms. Granger, well, she chose to go alone. I fail to understand why, considering, she'd told me months earlier that she was going to bring the two of you."

"She—she didn't say Malfoy was coming," Harry said, more to himself than anyone else.

It was suddenly very clear to him now. He turned to look at Ron, who somehow already knew what he was thinking.

It wasn't Professor McGonagall's fault after all. It was theirs. They let this happen.

They left Hermione to be devoured by the Slytherin snakes, helpless and alone.

"Ms. Granger is perfectly safe under the care of Professor Flitwick, I assure you." Professor McGonagall continued. How wrong she was. "Now please go back to your classes before I give both of you detention."

"She's not safe!" Harry yelled again. "You have to let us go to Beauxbatons! Please Professor!"

"Mr. Potter you are really testing my patience. Go back to you classes."

The Beauxbatons Academy of Magic was a glittering palace, most probably newer and brighter than Hogwarts. Its golden arches lined the very halls, making it seem like a pathway for the Gods themselves. The tall glass windows reached the floor and intricate chandeliers hung at the ceiling. It was a sight to behold indeed, but it was a depressing thought that no such glitter or gold could ever grab Hermione's attention. She was more concentrated on what was happening on the palace, rather than the palace itself.

There were books and booths and authors everywhere. It was like a dream to her.

She looked like she didn't know where to start so she lost herself in the crowd, trying out the booths, talking to different authors and grabbing all the books that caught her interest.

And she was just so happy.

Draco was watching her, not far. The moment Hermione had entered the convention her face lit up.

Just like the time she made a snow angel.

He felt something stir in his stomach again but he wasn't sure why that kept happening whenever she was around.

She was the only person who could make him feel that way.

She was the only person who could make him feel anything at all.

He didn't do much at the book convention, save for talking to a few Beauxbaton girls who wanted to know more about '*Ze magnifique Draco Malfoi*.' He'd answered a few of their questions but he got bored with them easily.

He was much more content following Hermione around and seeing her so happy.

"The Beauxbaton girls," Draco heard someone say. Blaise now stood beside him, carrying a bunch of books in his arms. He was referring to the Beauxbaton girls giggling and trailing after them. Draco snorted. "New fan club, Draco?"

"They won't stop following me."

He continued staring at Granger who was now having an enthusiastic conversation with another author, oblivious to everything else.

With her trusting nature, it would probably be easy enough for him to manipulate her into hating her friends…

"You have that look in your face again," Blaise said quietly. "You've done something evil or you're about to do something evil, *again*. Which one is it?"

Draco smirked.

"Both."

The clouds were dark and grey now. They moved dangerously up the sky, pouring water and hail over the glittering gold that is the Beauxbatons palace.

Thunder clapped loudly, making her gasp and cover her ears.

Her room was dark. The only light that could be seen came from the lightning outside the tall glass window. She could see her four poster bed from the small opening of the closet door.

She clutched the covers tighter around herself.

The closet was small and empty. She had ran inside the moment she'd heard the first thunder crack. She never liked thunderstorms. The traumatic experience she had experienced in her childhood had such a lasting effect on her. She could face dementors, Bellatrix, Death Eaters, or even Voldemort himself, but not thunderstorms.

Never thunderstorms.

It'll be over soon, she told herself.

Then it was silent and dark again.

Lightning flashed, with a loud sound, making her jump and cover her ears tighter. That's when she saw a figure standing beside her four poster bed. She knew who he was immediately, platinum blond hair and all. *What is he doing here?*

She closed her eyes at the crack of thunder again. When she opened them, she found herself staring at him. He was standing outside the closet, looking like a dark knight, handsome and evil as always.

"Are you hiding from me?" His voice was a low whisper.

She remained quiet. She could feel herself shivering from fear and cold. His tall figure towered over her, more so now that she was sitting on the floor, holding her knees to her chest.

"Granger. get up," he said quietly.

"Not now, Malfoy," she whispered in a soft, pleading voice. "I'm—I'm scared."

She stared down at the floor and covered her ears again as she heard another clap.

She could actually feel Malfoy smirking at her.

He squeezed himself inside the closet and squatted in front of her, staring at her straight in the eyes and making her even more frightened. He was close… too close.

"What did I tell you about being so vulnerable, love?"

She shut her eyes again at the sudden flash of lightning.

"I'm just— Go away," she whined. She didn't want him to see her like this.

"No," he said simply. She couldn't see his face in the dark but she knew he was enjoying this. Malfoy was a sadistic git and he enjoyed seeing other people in pain.

"I don't like thunderstorms, okay?" she admitted, jumping at another cracking sound.

"I can see that."

"What are you doing in my room anyways? What do you want?" she asked in annoyance.

He had laughed then, but it wasn't like the warm and happy laughs she'd hear whenever she was with Harry or Ron or friends. His laugh was cold and empty… just like him.

"You," he said leisurely, as if it was the most normal thing to say. "*I want you.*"

No. She pressed her back harder into the wall behind her. "You don't mean that," she muttered. "You—you hate me. You hate me so much you want nothing to do with me."

Lightning flashed and for a second she caught a glimpse of his irritated face. "Is that what you tell yourself to sleep at night?" he said coldly.

Then it was dark again. She could feel his hands playing with her the curl of her hair.

"Don't touch me," she said, but he didn't move.

"What are you going to do? Slap me?" he said smugly. "Go ahead."

"Stop being such a git!" she yelled angrily. She was trying to push him away but he didn't even budge.

"Tell me Granger, where's saint Potter now?"

She stopped pushing him at the mention of Harry's name. Harry had always hugged her and comforted her whenever there were thunderstorms. Harry had always told her everything would be alright.

Well… not exactly *always.*

"He wanted to meet the Chuckley Canyons," she stated bitterly. He sniggered, holding her hands in his. She glared at him.

"That's what friends are for," he said, his voice dripping with malice. "They use people."

"No! He's not using me!" she defended in outrage. "You'll never understand. You don't have friends."

She had regretted saying the words as soon as they'd left her lips. She stared at him apologetically.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean—"

"Oh I perfectly understand what's happening," he drawled condescendingly, ignoring her last statement. "You're just a tool to them, used all the time, ignored when not needed."

"You're wrong Malfoy," she said. She felt a lump on her throat.

He's wrong. He's so wrong. She kept telling herself.

But somehow, she had trouble trying to believe it.

"They're bastards, the whole lot of them."

She pressed her head in the wall and closed her eyes. Another thunder clapped. "Please stop manipulating me."

"They don't care about you."

She trembled slightly. Almost instantly, she thought of her friends abandoning her again. This feeling of loneliness— it was like she was outside of her home, staring at her friends and family through a glass window. They were happy and warm, oblivious to her presence. And no matter how hard she screamed for them, they couldn't hear her voice.

"I thought they were supposed to come with you, love?" he continued faintly. "So where are they now?"

Yes, that was what she wanted to ask herself. They'd promise to come here. They had crossed hearts on it too. So why was she alone now?

"I don't—"

She shouldn't be listening to him. She had to snap out of it before she hates Harry and Ron completely. They weren't bad people. They were her friends. They did *care*for her.

It scared her how easily he could have convinced her into believing his lies.

"N-no—you're wrong!" she said hysterically. "Stop it! Stop brainwashing me!"

She sensed his anger because he started clucking his tongue. He was disappointed at her. He stood up. She jumped at the sudden movement. "Get up."

"No," she said stubbornly, lowering her head on her knees as another lightning flashed.

"Don't test my patience," he said in a harsh voice. "I said get up."

When she didn't move she felt herself being pulled to her feet. She groaned when his hand touched the bruises on her wrists.

"Malfoy!" she screamed in pain. He was pulling too hard again. He dragged her outside the closet and tossed her to the four poster bed. She glared at him. "You're a bastard, you know that? Fuck you."

"Don't tempt me, love. I might just force you to," he threatened menacingly, eyes flashing with annoyance. For a moment, she thought he had only been joking, but the look on his face made her think otherwise.

She shuddered internally.

They stared at each other for a long time. Hermione didn't dare move, not when he was still angry. He waved his hands and the curtains closed and the room was suddenly quiet, she couldn't hear the thunder anymore.

He could do wandless magic?

And what spell had he used? Silencing charms only worked on *people*.

"Stop this childish nonsense now," he said harshly. "It's very unbecoming."

She saw her covers flying back to her and she grabbed them. "Unbecoming? You're not my mother," she snapped, unable to control her anger.

"Do you have a death wish?" he said dangerously taking a few steps forward. Her heart raced in horror.

"Alright, alright I'm sorry," she said nervously. She didn't want him to come any closer.

She shut her eyes tightly, thinking that he was going to grab her wrists again… but surprisingly, she felt him kiss her cheek.

"Goodnight, love," he said, smirking.

Then he was gone.

She stared dumb-founded at where he had stood seconds ago. She dreaded to think what could've happened if he stayed a little longer.

She cursed herself for almost falling for it, for his words. It was the way he had said it, the tone of his voice, the way he'd spoken— like everything that came from his mouth had been the rule—the truth. He was a good liar. He was a charmer too, *a snake.* He was trying to manipulate her…

And it was working.

———————————

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Sorry it took so long, I have a shit load of homework and my eye bags are so huge, I look like someone punched me in the face… twice :D

Annnnnnyways, I was suppose to turn this into a fluffy Draco-sleeps-in-Hermione's-bed-to-comfort-her-from-her-dreaded-fear-of-thunderstorms chapter but decided against it because it's totally not him. He'll be out of character.

So I wrote this instead. Bahaha.

I think this is my longest chapter so far. yay.

I hope you liked it!

THANKS FOR READING THIS :D I love you!

Chapter 5

WARNING : EXTREME EVIL AHEAD. I'M SERIOUS. This won't be my only warning for the entire story D:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Draco was really pissed right now.

For one thing, Granger looked like she had *easily* forgiven Potter and Weasley for meeting a pathetic Quidditch team rather than going with her to a book convention.

Secondly, Weasley, blood traitor, Potter's sidekick, and pathetic excuse for a human being, now had his slimy, filthy arm draped on her shoulders. He could see his face just inches away from her, and he was telling her something. It must've been really funny because she was laughing.

She looked so oblivious to what was happening. He stabbed his steak with his fork hard.

He wanted to hex the bloody red head right then and there.

How dare that *thing* touch what was his?

Blaise looked at him, then at Granger and Weasley, then at Draco's steak.

"Blaise," he said with a calm voice, but his features showed otherwise. "Change of plans. We go after Weasley first."

Ron walked towards the library with an air of enthusiasm and pride in his face.

Hermione sent him a letter to meet her at the library. After curfew. Alone. On the restricted area. Where it was dark.

He smiled stupidly and quickened his pace.

This was it. They were going to be together now, he could feel it. He had been waiting for this moment since before the war had started. He had loved her so much but the war had kept them from each other.

And now they were finally going to be together.

He couldn't wait 'til Hermione was his. He knew she was a know-it-all and annoying most of the time, and she could be quite boring too, but she was caring and pretty and she had brains. She had nice… skin too. And he felt his heart race whenever she was around.

That meant something, yeah?

He entered the library quietly, muttering Alohamora under his breath the way Hermione had taught him. He tiptoed his way to the restricted area and brushed his hand over his hair.

"Lumos," he muttered.

He saw a shadow move from one of the shelves.

"Hermione?"

His eyes widened when the light from his wand reached the figure's face.

"Hello, Weasley."

His violent screams echoed in the library.

Draco cast a "revised" silencing charm in the place to keep the wonderful sound from reaching the outside.

Weasley was writhing in pain in front of him and Draco stood watching, hands on his pockets, a smirk plastered on his face.

The idiot fell for the fake letter Blaise had placed in his bag when he hadn't been looking. Weasley had been so happy when he'd read the letter, he hadn't thought of asking Hermione if it had in fact been hers or not.

Somewhere in his grave, Voldie would be very proud.

Weasley had been lucky Draco was being cautious. Under normal circumstances, he would have tortured the git until he lost his mind and have him killed. Then he would have thrown his corpse in the lake and be on his way, as though nothing had happened.

But there were certain precautions. Draco had to be very thorough; else he'd be caught and sent to Azkaban.

So he can't risk killing Weasley with a simple killing curse. Even if he had the Luteus stone inside him.

"There's a stone, Draco." His voice was course and low. He looked at him with his piercing red eyes. "It can be quite difficult to obtain but this stone gives off much power."

Draco looked at the image Voldie had showed him.

"The Luteus Stone, my Lord?"

He'd read about that stone somewhere before but he hadn't been sure if it had indeed been real or simply a myth.

He was sure now.

"Yes," Voldie said. "It intensifies magical abilities. It will ensure our victory over Dumbledore and his precious Potter. With this stone wandless magic will be limitless. The Imperius curse will be untraceable, the Cruciatus Curse will be ten times stronger, and the Killing curse…" He paused and smirked. "can be cast without using a single wand."

Draco liked the idea of that.

From then on, he had sworn to obtain the stone for his own.

By the time Draco had lifted the curse off; Weasley was immobile, clutching his stomach, his face flat on the cold, stone floor.

…where it belonged.

He kicked Weasley on the ribs, causing him to roll over in pain.

"M-Malfoy," he choked.

"Now Weasley, we can do this the easy way or the hard way," he said slowly, so that even Weasley's non-existent brain could understand. "You drink this on your own, or I shove it down your throat. Personally, I prefer the long way." He sniggered. Torturing blood traitors was his favorite pastime.

"You bast—" Draco kicked the blood traitor *in the face* before he could finish his sentence. He groaned in pain and his lip started bleeding.

Draco had to remember to get rid of these shoes later.

He tossed Weasley the vial and waited. Draco thought he had to get his hands dirty and force the potion in his mouth but surprisingly, Weasley took the initiative. He was not in his right mind anymore, too exhausted from hours and hours of unbearable torture. He chuckled.

Too easy.

The moonseed poison, used to murder a person as soon as he smells rose petals. Untraceable. Deadly.

"And I thought Gryffindors were *noble*," Draco said while rolling his eyes. "*Obliviate*."

"Ron!" he heard Hermione's voice from behind him.

Ron turned around and saw her running hurriedly towards him. He smiled.

"Where have you been? You weren't at breakfast," she said in between huffs. She frowned when she saw him. He looked horrible. There was a terribly big bruise on his left eye and a cut on his lips. "Merlin what happened to your face?"

"I fell down the moving staircases," he said, slightly embarrassed at his clumsiness. Last night was a blur to him and he hadn't remembered much except that he had fallen down the moving staircases.

"Are you alright?" she looked at him with so much concern.

"It's nothing. I'm fine." He stifled a yawn, trying to hide the smile on his lips because he was so glad she was concerned about him. "I overslept from cramming on Flitwick's homework last night."

"Didn't I remind you to finish that weeks ago?" she scolded him.

"But I'm good at cramming," he whined. She laughed and punched him playfully in his arm.

"So—er –listen— Do you…" she said, shyly. She bit her lip. "Do you want to go with me to Hogsmeade this weekend?"

His heart thumped on his chest. She looked so adorable, a blush tinted her cheeks. He wanted to just kiss her.

This was it, the moment he had been waiting for…

Say no.

"No," he said instantly.

"Oh," she muttered, looking very disappointed. "You're busy this weekend?"

No. You just don't want to go with her.

"No, actually, I just don't want to go with you. No offense Hermione, but you're kinda boring," he said shrugging. He told her all the things inside his mind, who kept telling him this was what he wanted. *This is what you want Ron. This is what you want.*

Hermione stared sadly at his retreating back.

What happened back there? What was wrong with Ron?

She was sure they were getting along fairly well and she even thought he actually had feelings for her. One minute he acts all friendly and sweet, next he acts distant and harsh.

She sighed and threw another rock at the lake.

Perhaps Malfoy was right…

No, actually, I don't want to go with you, Ron's voice echoed in her head.

How could she have been so stupid? How could she even think that he was even remotely interested in her?

"You'll anger the giant squid if you keep throwing rocks in there, you know," she heard a voice.

She threw another rock and sighed again. She really didn't want his company right now. She wanted to be left alone, but Draco Malfoy… well… he never listens.

"Good. Hopefully, the giant squid will swallow me whole and kill me instantly so I'll never have to live again."

She didn't look at him when he sat beside her on the grass. She could feel his intense eyes staring at her.

"Alright, what's wrong?"

"Wrong? Nothing's wrong. Why would you think something's wrong?" she said while forcing a bitter laugh. "Nothing's wrong," she repeated, as if she was trying to convince herself.

"I heard you the first time." He snorted.

Draco stared at her miserable expression and smirked. He didn't need her to tell him. He had already known what was *wrong*. He had been there when it had happened after all. Besides, Hermione was a terrible liar. He didn't need Legilimency to see what she was thinking. Her eyes told him all.

She was an open book to him.

"How could he do this?" she said loudly, unable to control herself from blurting the words out of her mouth. "He acts all friendly and sweet and then suddenly he doesn't like me? Did I do something wrong? Did I do something to make him hate me?"

She lowered her head to her knees.

Draco didn't say anything for a while. He allowed himself to stare at her, studying her exquisite features. The expression on her face was that of sadness and something else. He had no idea what else. He had known how to read emotions but he had no clue why people feel the way they do. Emotions were a vague topic for him.

He knew how to feel but he could never understand the reason why.

"Who are we talking about here?" he said finally, feigning innocence.

She gave him a look of utmost contempt and irritation.

"Ron!" she told him angrily. "I asked him to come with me to Hogsmeade! I've been wanting to ask him since last month and when I finally plucked up the courage!"

Draco hadn't known why, but he suddenly felt the strong urge to strangle Weasley again. Somehow, the hours and hours of pain he had inflicted on the boy hadn't been enough.

It was a good thing too, that he had *controlled* Weasley before he could say yes.

How convenient was it that he had seen the two of them talking in the corridors. Draco had cast an Imperius curse on Weasley as soon as he heard her ask. It had been risky doing such a dark curse so openly, but it had been worth it. Besides, she was starting to hate him now. Just a little more plotting and she'd want nothing to do with Weasley.

And that's when Draco would finally kill him.

"And you know what he told me? He said I was boring, that's what!" she yelled, her face flushed red in fury. "He doesn't even care! He doesn't even care that I like him!"

Excuse me?

He clenched his fists at the last statement. Did he just hear correctly? Did she just say she bloody liked Weasley *right in his face*?

"You," he said through gritted teeth. "*like* him?"

Her expression suddenly changed from anger to confusion.

"I— yes," she said quietly, staring once again at the lake. She had a far-away look in her eyes. She was unaware of the sudden change in atmosphere. She should really learn how to keep her guard up when he was around.

He wanted to hex the bloody shit out of her for saying that so openly, to yank her hair for even daring to say she liked another man.

He struggled, immensely, to control himself from hexing her.

She was *his*. She wasn't allowed to like anyone but him.

"Well, he doesn't like you back, love," he said harshly. She winced at his words. "Get over it."

"I know. I just—" she said, while trying so hard not to cry. "I wanted him to."

He threw a rock at the lake with such force that it covered a great distance before sinking to the depths. Oh, Weasley was going to pay.

"I'm sorry." He faked sympathy, but really, all he wanted to do was strangle her for being so naïve and stupid.

Not now, Draco. It's not time. He tried to calm himself, but it wasn't working at all.

They were silent again. He could feel himself shaking slightly in anger, trying his best to keep his cool.

But when he looked at her to see a few tears escape her eyes, his eyes flashed dangerously.

That is *it.*

She was *crying…* over *Weasley.*

"I'm sorry Malfoy, I just like him so mu—"

Before she could say anything else, he had yanked her hair with his hand, pulling her roughly towards him. She whimpered at the tug of her scalp but he could care less. He couldn't control himself anymore. He felt his blood boil and he saw red. He felt her warm breaths touching his face. She had fearful look in her eyes. Good.

"Enough," he whispered harshly.

And then he crashed his lips to hers before she could protest. He kissed her with so much passion and anger and lust, it was almost punishing. He bit her hard, making her whimper faintly against his lips, allowing him to invade her mouth. His tongue forced its way into her mouth and she moaned, trying to pull away. No. He won't let her. His hands clutched her head preventing any means of escape. He was devouring her, teasing her, forcing her to kiss him back…

She hadn't known exactly when it had happened, but suddenly her tongue was moving with his. She was kissing him back and she didn't care. She wasn't thinking straight. She supposed it was because she was upset with Ron, so she poured out all her anger on kissing Malfoy.

His mouth was all warm and sweet and she couldn't help herself. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and deepened the kiss. She let him explore her mouth. She was kissing him so hard she almost forgot to breathe…

And they were battling for control now.

He was almost taken aback by her boldness, but he didn't stop. He was enjoying everything, how her body leaned over his, how her hair was so soft between his fingers, how her lips felt so right against his, how he was kissing her so hard he tasted blood…

And it tasted so fucking *good*…

But she just *had* to push him away, didn't she?

She stood up quickly, her breaths in soft pants. She stared at him in complete shock, as if she couldn't believe what had just happened. His gaze never left hers.

The look of dread and regret in her eyes was absolutely *delicious*.

His lips slowly curled into a smirk.

She took a few steps backward. Then she ran away from him frantically, never looking back.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Yes, the original plan was that Draco called you-know-who, Voldie. LOL.

And Luteus means yellow in Latin. Just an interesting fact :)

The moonseed poison, poor Ron D: let's see what happens next.

Draco's very evil in this chapter (I'm sorry about that) I did warn you, you know. No fluff :p

Since a few people suggested it, I might consider writing a tomRiddle/hermione fic… but I'm not sure yet. If I do write one, please read it. :D any other suggestions?

Message me again if there are any errors ;)

Read and Review. Yay.

Thank you :)

Chapter 6

NOTE : *Moonseed poison can only be activated by the scent of roses.*

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

"You really should get some sleep Hermione."

The ever-so-stubborn Gryffindor shook her head and continued reading, without even looking at him. He rolled his eyes. For the past few days, Blaise had been trying (and failing miserably) to get the stubborn Head Girl to go to bed. He would fall asleep late at night when she was still up, reading a book or doing something (like perfecting her already perfect homework), and when he woke up she would still be awake.

He could already see the dark circles under her eyes.

Her usual glow was gone and her bossy, know-it-all attitude was deteriorating. She was quiet most of the time now. She looked like a walking corpse: physically present, but not actually there.

Perhaps she found out about what Draco did to Weasley?

She couldn't have. Draco was too thorough and cautious.

Blaise snorted. How could someone of her intellect care about someone so dim-witted? Had it been someone else, he would have felt bad.

But really, he could care less about what happened to Weasley.

Potter, on the other hand, well that was a different story.

The Zabinis were neutral during the war. They didn't take part, didn't choose any sides. Some thought it as cowardice but the Zabinis thought differently, for they *were* different. They wanted nothing to do with fighting and blood spill.

They believed pureblood supremacy could be achieved by ways other than war.

Besides, he-who-must-not-be-named was a half-blood. They couldn't picture themselves following a half-blood.

Potter had the nerve to accuse him and his parents of being Death Eaters. The bastard.

His false presumptions caused his parents a lifetime in Azkaban. He clenched his fists at the thought.

He wanted revenge… excruciating, agonizing, *sweet* revenge.

"Go to bed, Hermione." He said gently while placing his hand on her shoulder.

Surprisingly, he didn't hate Hermione for her dirty blood. He admired her even. She was different in her own way. Just like him.

She merely shook her head again and continued reading. He frowned.

Draco must've done something evil again.

"Ron!" Hermione heard herself scream loudly as a bludger came flying towards him. He didn't see it coming and instantly, he was knocked off his broom.

Oh Merlin no.

She could hear the Gryffindor crowd screaming and gasping on the stands as Ron Weasley came crashing to the ground.

She had watched the traumatic scene like it had only been a movie. It had all been so surreal. She couldn't breathe properly.

Please let him be alright. Please.

It was in that very moment that she suddenly looked up and met his piercing grey orbs. He was riding his broom lazily, without much effort. He had never looked for the snitch the moment the game had started. He had pretended to chase after it a couple of times, but had stopped whenever he'd been close enough to grab it. It had infuriated Harry to a great extent. Perhaps that was what he wanted anyways, *to infuriate Harry*. He wanted to hurt Ron too. He probably planned all this…

Draco Malfoy's arrogant smirk was directed precisely towards her.

She sent him her most venomous glare. If looks could kill, he would probably be dead by now.

She forced her eyes away from him and headed towards an unconscious Ron.

"Just stop your worrying alright?" he angrily yelled at both his friends who were now seated beside his bed. "I'm fine!"

"We're just concerned about you," Harry defended. "Malfoy was being a prat. He wasn't even trying to win! He probably ordered the beaters to attack you."

Hermione nodded.

"Come off it, will you? Don't let that prat get to you," Ron said.

Hermione shifted in her seat uncomfortably. That was exactly what she had been doing lately: letting Malfoy get to her. She hadn't slept well at all because it was all she ever thought about, *the awful kiss*.

Guilt flooded over her when she remembered kissing him back. *Stupid, stupid Hermione,* she thought.

"Do you need anything?" she asked, shaking the thought away. "More pillows? Or can I get you a chocolate frog?"

"Hermioneee," he whined. "Stop treating me like I'm a baby."

"I am not!" She grinned.

"Look, I know Malfoy's a cunning git, but he won't get to me easily," Ron said proudly. "I'm not scared of him, he can't touch me."

"Pfft. Yeah right." Harry rolled his eyes. All three of them laughed. "Just don't scare us like that again, yeah?"

"Alright, alright," he muttered.

"You sure you're fine, Ron?" asked Hermione again.

"For the umpteenth time, yes!" Ron said while rolling his eyes. "Now come here you lot. Give me a hug."

A feel of warmth came flooding to her senses when she felt herself being pulled into a massive bear hug. The arms around her were locked tight, never letting go. It reassured her that they would stay with her always. This… this was *home*. No one can harm her here. The pent up anger she had for them disappeared in a blink of an eye. She remembered why they were so important to her. She won't let Malfoy brainwash her into hating them. She won't let him destroy *this*.

Malfoy doesn't know how much Harry and Ron meant to her.

Everything felt right in their arms. She was safe there*… safe and sound.*

"I love you guys," Ron whispered quietly.

She entered the Hospital Wing at exactly 12 noon, while everyone else was in the Great Hall, eating lunch. She fixed her hair when she saw her reflection in a mirror and straightened her skirt. She made her way to his bed and replaced the flowers on the vase with the lavenders she had picked outside this morning.*It would remind him of me,* she thought happily. It was only when she sat at the chair beside his bed that she'd noticed that he was awake.

"Ronnie-poo," she said seductively, never noticing the sudden twitch in his eyes at her pathetic attempts at endearment.

"What are you doing here?" He didn't look too pleased at seeing her. She smiled.

"I wanted to see if you were alright."

"Well I am, so can you please leave?"

She masked the hurt in her eyes with another smile and tried again.

"Look, I just wanted to—"

"I love Hermione." He interrupted and turned to the side so he wasn't facing her anymore. "And take those off the vase. I hate lavenders."

She felt the tears falling down her eyes. She grabbed the flowers and left the Hospital Wing running. She ran so fast she didn't see where she was going. She collided with something hard and fell on her bum, lavenders scattered everywhere.

"Oh Merlin, are you alright?" she heard a deep voice. When she looked up she found herself staring at the grey eyes of Draco Malfoy. She couldn't believe her luck. *Draco Malfoy. Slytherin Sex God*. He helped her up and with a wave of his hand, the lavenders were back in her arms. *He can do wandless magic!*

"Yes, I'm fine." She giggled, trying to contain her excitement. He smiled at her and she couldn't help but blush. She hadn't even noticed that his charming little smile never reached his eyes.

He was absolutely *gorgeous*.

"Why were you crying?" he said, looking curious and worried. She was suddenly aware of her tearstained face.

"Oh it's—" she muttered. "Ron hates me."

"Oh." He frowned slightly. He looked genuinely concerned about her. "Now why would you think that?"

"He said so." She wiped her tears with her hands. "I just want him back. I want things to be the way they were, when Granger wasn't in the picture… the whore," she added in a whisper.

She hadn't seen the slight flash of irritation in his eyes.

"Don't worry, he'll come around." He smiled reassuringly. The rumours about him being evil weren't true after all. He was so nice. Why would people assume otherwise? "I'm sure he won't be able to resist someone as pretty as you. Miss?"

"Lavender Brown." She giggled at his compliment. Parvati would be so jealous when Lavender tells her that *the* Draco Malfoy thought she was pretty.

"Lavender Brown," he repeated in a perfectly charming tone. "It's a pleasure meeting you."

He shook her hand and started to walk away, she was staring at him the whole time, grinning stupidly.

"Hey," He looked back, forgetting to tell her something. "I heard Ron Weasley likes roses."

He winked and continued walking off, his dark robes billowing beneath him.

Yup, the rumours about him were not true after all.

––––––––––––

It was so easy to manipulate people into doing what he wanted.

The nice guy act Draco had pulled on Lilac Blue or Lava Beige or whatever the hell her name was, worked perfectly.

The girl was annoying. Always giggling and trying to be seductive. He rolled his eyes. Talking to her made him want to pull all his hair out.

And she had the nerve to call *his* Hermione a whore.

No matter. There was no use being annoyed about it now. The plan was in motion after all.

Divide and conquer.

Just thinking about it made him smirk. He was done trying to convince Hermione into hating Weasley. It was an impossible feat, she was far too blinded by the *morals of friendship* to understand.

He had been so close… so close to manipulating her. But for some unknown reason, she reverted back again.

He was going to have to fix that.

He made his way to the head common room. He wanted to see her. He had noticed her gloomy demeanor during classes today. Blaise had told him Hermione hadn't been sleeping for a few days now. It was time to pay his princess a little visit… his first visit after their *snogging session* beside the lake.

"You!" she yelled angrily the moment she saw him. She stood up from where she was sitting, book forgotten, wand aimed towards him.

"Me?" Draco said in a mocking tone, knowing all too well that it irritated her more.

"You hurt Ron." The look on her face was extremely murderous, it was a sight to behold.

Yes, the angry, passionate, feisty Hermione Granger was a sight to behold indeed.

How pretty.

He ignored the little fact that she wanted to defend Weasley.

"I didn't do anything, love." He chuckled, taking a few steps forward. "At least not *unintentionally*."

He threw off the curse she'd sent him easily, with a lazy flick of his wand. Hermione wondered how he had gotten his wand out so fast. It made her nervous, but she wasn't going to back down. Not to the likes of him.

She sent another hex at him, wanting nothing more than to wipe that smirk off his devilishly handsome face. "You foul, evil—"

"Yes, do go on." He was twirling his wand in his fingers arrogantly. The twisted, sadistic smile never left his face. This was nothing but *entertainment* to him. It made her feel sick. She had to calm down. He was doing this to unnerve her. "Still mad about the kiss, Hermione?"

That one struck a nerve because he saw her twitch slightly. "Shut up."

"Funny, I don't remember you hating me this much considering *you kissed back*."

A flash of purple light sent him crashing to the wall but he recovered quickly. It hadn't hurt him the slightest bit, but it had surprised him nonetheless. He placed his wand back in his robe. *Very impressive Hermione.*

"You knew perfectly well I was upset." Her voice was filled with venom and her eyes were blazing. "That kiss was nothing but a— a big—"

"Mistake," he finished for her.

His eyes darkened then, piercing into her brown ones suddenly. The cold, unforgiving look he gave her was so frightening that she took a step back. He was furious. She didn't have time to react when her wand flew out of her hands. He was walking right towards her and when he was inches away, she felt his breath on her ear.

He didn't even use his wand. How did he—?

"*Crucio,*" he whispered softly.

She grabbed his arms for support at the sudden attack. *There was so much pain.* Her head was faced down and her eyes were shut tight. She was screaming so much her throat was sore. She felt like a million knives were piercing her skin and every part of her body was being ripped apart.

He didn't do anything when she dug her nails on his skin, didn't pull away even when he started to bleed.

"S-Stop," she managed to say. She couldn't hold onto him anymore so she fell to the floor and clutched her stomach. She curled up into a ball slowly, biting her lip to prevent herself from screaming.

He squatted next to her, brushing a lock of hair off her face.

"Mistake?" he asked coldly.

The pain didn't stop. It kept getting worse and worse, like every bone on her body was cracking all at once. It was far more excruciating than Bellatrix's curse and she wanted it all to end.

But she wasn't going to let him win.

"Y-yes. It was a m-mistake," she choked out. He clicked his tongue at her stubbornness and didn't lift the curse off. "I-I love Ron."

How touching. He sniggered at her little love confession, knowing all too well what would become of Weasley soon enough. "He's going to *die*."

"No!" she whimpered desperately. "What did you do?"

He merely chuckled at her horrified expression.

Okay, so he did feel *a little* bad for cursing her (which was a bit surprising for him because he never felt bad for torturing anyone), but he was just so angry when she'd said it was all a mistake. She needed to learn her lesson.

She needed to learn that she belonged to *him*.

Why would she try so hard to defend Weasley anyways? All he ever did was ditch her and use her all the time. Weasley insulted her and brought her down just so he would feel good about himself. He was insecure around her and jealous of her and Potter, because without them, he would be useless.

Weasley didn't even notice that Hermione hadn't been getting any sleep lately or that she looked gloomier than usual.

So why?

She must've been mental. If this was what they called *friendship*, then he was glad he didn't have friends.

She would be so much better off.

Come on love, just give up so I don't have to hurt you anymore.

He pitied her. The curse still wasn't lifted off. She saw black spots in her eyes and everything turned black.

She passed out? Draco cursed under his breath.

Hermione's determination was admirable, but if she kept opposing him, she might not survive.

He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. He looked at the beautiful and unconscious form in front of him and touched her cheek gently. He had underestimated her a little. She was far more strong-willed than he had thought.

Bloody Gryffindors.

At least she was asleep now. He'd have to modify her memory. He carried her bridal style and walked to the stairs that led to her room.

"What happened here?" Blaise had just entered the common room. His eyes landed on Draco, then on the sleeping Head Girl in his arms.

They really do *look good together.* Blaise thought grimly. Draco smirked at him.

"I finally got her to fall asleep."

She had entered the Hospital Wing for the second time that day. Flowers of a different kind were in her hands, a mixture of reds and whites and some yellows. She wasn't sure what color he liked so she'd picked them all.

Quietly, she replaced the flowers on the vase with the roses.

That's when he started convulsing, coughing up blood from his mouth and some were leaking out of his eyes.

"M-Madam Pomfrey!" she yelled in horror.

The slightly shaken healer came hurtling towards Ron but it was too late.

There was so much blood. His literally bloodshot eyes were open but there was nothing in them. He was dead.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I'M SORRY I KILLED RON. D:

I had to D: It was a crucial part of my plot! Don't kill me D:

I'm so sorry. Read and Review..

Thanks hun :)

Chapter 7

I AM SO TERRIBLY SORRY I KILLED RON. it had to be done you see :(you'll find out why here..

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Her soft sobs. Hermione had heard them the moment she had stepped inside the Hospital Wing. Ginny was sitting on the floor. Her head was down, her arms were on the bed and her hands were clutching the fabric tightly.

Haltingly, Hermione traced the white cotton bed sheets with her fingertips.

Ron had been here. He had slept here. He had died here.

He had died.

Hadn't the fallen of the war been enough?

Now Ron was gone too.

She felt a lump on her throat. She wanted more tears to pour out of her so badly but she couldn't cry anymore. She was dry. There were no more tears to be shed.

Harry was the one who told Hermione everything. He had woken her up at the head common room and sat on her bed. His breaths had been heavy, his voice had cracked, his whole body had trembled.

And he had been crying silently the whole time.

And she hadn't even noticed she had been crying with him, until she had seen the teardrops on her school skirt and she had felt Harry's shaking arms wrap around her.

I love you guys…

She didn't know what to say to Ginny right now, so she just patted her back and sat with her.

Hermione wanted to comfort her, to tell her everything would be alright, but she wasn't so sure anymore.

So she stayed with Ginny in silence. For hours and hours, until the sun was down, until Ginny couldn't cry anymore, until she was sure Ginny was already asleep.

Her gaze fell to the vase beside the bed, the roses. They were dry and wilted, but one was… black?

She wouldn't have seen it in another position but since she was on the floor, it was very obvious, *the black rose*. She reached for it with her right hand and then it withered, just like

the other roses.

She stood up and rushed to the doors.

Madam Pomfrey had told them that the cause of his death was his strange reaction to the medicine. It had happened before in some cases, albeit rarely. Still, Hermione doubted her. She had read of some cases of bleeding from centaur blood which was used in most medicines, but to have him bleed like that… what a *strange* reaction indeed…

"Do you remember the roses?"

"What?" Harry said, his puffy green eyes looked back at her curiously.

"The roses on the vase beside Ron's bed," she said slowly, thinking of a better way she could explain this to him.

"No, I wasn't looking." Confusion was written all over his face. He wiped his glasses with the fabric of his robe. "What is this about?"

"The other day, I was in the Hospital wing with Ginny and, and—" she looked at him seriously. She shut her eyes and composed herself. "Harry, I think Ron was *murdered*."

She had been so sure Harry would do something brash and tell her that they should go find the murderer at once. Like the time he had dreamt of Sirius being held captive in the Ministry of Magic. Patiently, she waited for Harry's reaction.

But a minute had passed and he remained standing there, just staring at her.

"Look, Hermione, I know you're upset about all this. Ron's death was a huge blow on all of us," Harry's voice was filled with genuine concern for her. He gently held her hand. "Maybe you should go see someone."

"What? No, no I'm not upset," she said, shaking her head and pulling her hand away from his. "Well, yes I am, but that's not the point. I don't need therapy. I just think this wasn't an accident!"

"Stop it Hermione, you need to rest."

"I don't need to *sleep*." Her voice was rising in irritation now. "The roses were dry and wilted, but one was black, Harry. I know roses wither but they most certainly don't turn black. Unless they were affected by something, like moonseed perhaps."

"Voldemort's dead, Hermione," Harry said angrily. *Why wasn't he listening? Why was he shutting her out?* "His followers are about to die in Azkaban and we're at peace now. Who could possibly—"

"I don't know!" She was yelling at him for being so stupid. She grabbed his shoulders and shook him, as if trying to get him to wake up. "I don't know. Just hear me out Harry! Please!"

Harry looked at her for a long time, studying her with his startlingly green eyes. She pleaded with him silently, tried to get him to accept the possibility that Ron might have been murdered.

And that the murderer might still be out there.

Come on Harry, come on.

She thought for a second that Harry was going to change his mind…

But Harry only turned his back on her.

"I don't want to hear this," he said harshly. "Get some rest."

She stared at his retreating back, remembering an all too familiar feeling. He was leaving her again.

"Harry!" she called out desperately.

But he never looked back.

Hermione scanned the contents of a rather large, old book from the restricted area quietly, as to not get caught. She had sneaked in with Harry's invisibility cloak. She had been searching for proof of Ron's death. She was sure it was moonseed, but so far no such book contained information about it.

Where had she read it before?

She was determined to find out what happened to Ron. She wasn't going to give up until she did. It was the only way she would get any *closure*.

She was going to lose her mind if she didn't find out.

And if he was murdered, *if he died in the hands of some man*, Ron's death had to be brought to justice.

She was going to make sure of it.

Harry was just upset. He didn't like the idea of dealing with murder and death all over again. He's already been through enough.

So she was going to get to the bottom of this with or without his help.

She stifled a yawn. The only time she had fallen asleep after a few weeks of sleepless nights was when she was doing Arithmancy research. She didn't even know how she had fallen asleep, she barely remembered anything that night.

Poisons.

Conflagration d'Ame…

Greyia…

Ipheion…

Liatris…

Malephora…

Melianthus…

Menispermum (moonseed)…

"Aha! There it is!" She whispered impatiently.

is an extremely deadly poison. It is odorless, colorless, and retains its potency when dissolved in another liquid. It causes death within several seconds of smelling roses. There is no known symptom that shows it has been ingested. The only known sign is the rose turning into black and withering, after the drinker dies.

She took a deep breath. She was right. Ron drank moonseed poison. He *was* murdered.

Her trembling fingers almost dropped the heavy book. She felt her mind go blank, felt the tears about to leak out of her once again. She closed her eyes and tried to force them back. But the moment her lids pressed shut she saw Ron in her mind, smiling back at her. And the tears escaped her eyes, running down her cheeks.

She cannot break down now. She can't.

Wiping the tears roughly off her face, she removed the invisibility cloak and sat on the floor. Quill on one hand, she wrote all the information she could get.

The brewing process of Menispermum is incredibly difficult, containing 727 steps over a seven month maturation period. Because of this, Menispermum is rarely used and fairly unknown to most wizards and witches, and is only known to a few pureblood famil—"

"Who's there?" she heard a voice, making her shut the book out of nervousness. She saw moving figures standing at the end of the bookshelves with their wands out. It was dark and she couldn't see their faces.

She stood up and pointed the small light of her wand to their direction.

Slytherins. Three of them, one was holding a thick book in his hands. They stared at her in absolute horror. An escape route popped into her head.

"I should be asking you that question." She returned the book in the shelf and walked over to them confidently. She was going to use her Head girl status to make an excuse for herself. "It's past curfew. What are you still doing here? And in the restricted area, too."

They were probably sneaking around. She wondered what they were looking for.

"You're Hermione Granger," said one boy with blonde hair.

"Oh well spotted," she said irritably. "50 points from Slyther—"

"You—you and Potter sent our parents to Azkaban!"

She was taken aback by the sudden uncontrolled anger. They aimed their wands at her threateningly. She wasn't the least bit intimidated. *I don't have time for this. I need to find Ron's murderer.*

"They deserved it," she hissed.

Suddenly she felt a sharp pain in her left cheek, causing her to fall over at the impact. She recovered quickly and stunned the boy who had slapped her angrily. And then she sent a Leg-

Locker Curse to the boy on his left. She sent another stunning spell at the third boy but he had managed to shield himself.

"*Incarcerous!*" he yelled, before she could send another stunning spell at him.

Thick ropes out of thin air wrapped around her body, causing her to fall down and rendering her immobile. She took a deep breath, telling herself not to panic. She could get out of this. She was still holding her wand. He walked towards her, smiling nastily at her helpless position.

Suddenly, she saw him being pulled by the hair and tossed away from her by a fourth figure.

Him again. Draco Malfoy.

What the bloody hell?

She knew Malfoy was infuriated. She just knew it. It wasn't the anger she saw when he had almost killed Blaise or the anger directed towards her whenever they got in a row. No. His face was expressionless but she saw it in his eyes.

They were *burning*.

He cut the ropes off her with a Diffindo Charm and pulled her up, forced her to stand behind him, *a protective stance*. The boy she stunned suddenly regained consciousness. All three Slytherins were looking at him with fear in their eyes. She didn't blame them, she was pretty scared herself.

The effect Malfoy had was different. It was daunting, cold, like a dementor who sucked the happiness out of you. Only it was worse… much worse.

Get yourself together, Hermione.

"You *dare* touch her?" Draco said coldly.

"D-Draco," said the guy holding the book. "We—we're sorry."

Draco looked like he wasn't listening at all. Hermione's eyes widened. Within seconds they were on the floor, squirming and screaming. *All at once.*

"M-Malfoy?" She tugged his arm.

How is he doing this?

Draco wasn't satisfied. He wanted them to scream louder, to make them hurt so much they'd wish they were never born. He wasn't contented still, even when Nott pissed his pants from so much pain, even when Harper started to claw the floor with his nails, even when Pritchard wasn't even moving anymore. He wanted to *kill* them. No one was allowed to hurt her but him, *no one*.

What—what is this?

Something was so… *warm?* He looked at the source and sure enough he found her small, pale hands holding his own.

Tightly.

Slowly his gaze found its way to her brown eyes. She stared back at him. She was silently telling him to stop.

And without even thinking twice, without even looking at the three dolts writhing in pain in front of him, he lifted the curse off.

Just like that.

Harper started to throw up.

Draco could care less. He was confused at what he just did.

He dragged Hermione out with him.

She stood quietly in the empty halls. She could feel his eyes on her back and it made her look down and shift uncomfortably. He was circling around her slowly, clucking his tongue in disapproval. Clearly, he didn't like what she had gotten herself into.

She scowled at him.

"I told you not to be vulnerable." He stopped in front of her, lifting her chin with his wand so she would look him. His tone sounded quite calm, but his eyes told her he was still angry.

"I wasn't." She looked back in determination. "I was fine even before you came along."

"*Of course,* you were," he said sarcastically. "You were tied and helpless on the floor."

"What could they have possibly done to me?" She swatted his wand away. "I've faced Death Eaters far more powerful—"

"Don't underestimate them," he interrupted, sneering at her boldness. He tossed her a heavy book. She caught it, almost falling over at the sudden weight.

The Dark Arts, Beauty and Power.

"That book," he said. "Nott was holding it, he was going to try it on you. I know him well."

She looked at him with wide eyes. He nodded his head, urging her to take a look. She scanned the contents of the book quickly, curses of different kinds, thousands of them, all illegal, all lethal. She suddenly felt dizzy.

"Not feeling so brave now, hmm?" he hissed coldly.

"Don't lecture me on this! Don't act like you care about me!" she snapped back. 'The Cruciatus Curse Malfoy? *Seriously?*' She pushed the book furiously back to his chest. "What's wrong with you?"

He merely raised an eyebrow. "I suppose you want me to apologize?" He looked indifferent… like he had done this before… *so many times before.* "I'm *not* sorry for what I've done to them. They could die for all I care."

You don't mean that Malfoy, I know you don't…

50

"Don't you have even the least bit of remorse?" she asked desperately.

He pretended to think for a while.

"*No.*" he answered conceitedly.

She groaned and turned away from, shutting her eyes tight and rubbing her forehead with her right hand.

Draco knew what she was thinking. He knew what she was going to ask next. He contemplated for a while on whether he should modify her memory again or just let her find out about everything, about how he had used the Cruciatus Curse without a wand. She was a smart girl.

He decided on the latter.

"How did you do it?" she said quietly, turning to look at him again. "How?"

He smirked. He was mocking her again. She clenched her fists in fury.

"Does it matter?" He sniggered, touching her cheek tenderly with the tip of his fingers and sending shivers down her body. "I did it for you."

She jumped away from his touch.

"Y-you don't mean that."

"Stop being so naïve."

"You're not answering my question!"

"Hermione!" They both looked at the end of the Hall and there stood Harry. He was glaring daggers at Malfoy who only smirked back.

Harry looked really pissed off.

"You were supposed to meet me in the head common room about an hour ago," Harry yelled at her.

"Goodnight then, *Hermione,*" Malfoy said, emphasizing her name with mock sweetness that enraged Harry even more. He kissed her on the cheek before she could protest. And then he sent another arrogant look towards Harry, before walking away.

"You have some explaining to do," Harry said when he reached her.

He was holding the Marauder's Map in one hand.

"I know."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

(my longest note so far, I think. Sorry…)

Just be warned *again* that this isn't a nice, fluffy fic where Draco just turns 'good' and prances around with ponies, unicorns, rainbows and live happily ever after. He's cruel and

cold and heartless. That doesn't just disappear in a day. It takes time and HELP from friends before he can change. Draco doesn't have friends, sadly.

That's where Hermione comes in ;)

But seriously, it takes time! Don't rush me :p

Draco's psychopathic, I know :D

Oh well… I like him that way anyways… I'm so sadistic…

I killed Ron so that Hermione would soon be aware of the evil that Draco has turned out to be. If he does any other thing, like killing centaurs or killing other people, it wouldn't catch her attention that much. But if it was Ron… she would want to find out.

After all, she should at least stand a chance against Draco and not be so helpless ;) don't you think so too?

Thanks for all the suggestions, and grammar check, and reviews, and subscribers, and favorites :)

I really appreciate them.

Read and review again. Yay.

Thank you so much.

HELLOJULIE.

Chapter 8

"Care to explain to me what you were doing in the Restricted Section past curfew?"

Hermione tensed slightly at his words. They were heading back towards the Head dorms together. Harry was walking beside her. He had his wand out and a faint light was coming from its tip. She sped up, unconsciously trying to avoid his question.

"Malfoy came to the head common room, you know," she heard Harry's voice call out to her. "I told him you weren't there and he ran off as soon as I accidentally mentioned you were in the library."

So that's how he found out, she told herself.

Harry quickened his phase and blocked her path.

"Well?" he muttered irritably.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Might as well let him know what she was doing now. She opened her eyes.

"I was doing research on the moonseed poison," she said calmly.

As soon as the words escaped her mouth, Harry's face contorted in disbelief.

"That again?" he said irritably. "Hermione, let it go!"

"No, Harry! I won't let it go!" she yelled angrily. She's had enough of this. "I can't just *let it go*. I'm not going to *let it go*!"

She stressed each word at him to emphasize her point. Her ragged breaths echoed in the silent halls. She took the notes about the moonseed she had been taking earlier (before she was rudely interrupted by the Slytherins). Then she threw them angrily in front of his face. Harry stared at her, dumb-founded. And then he bent down to pick them up.

She walked past him hurriedly, not caring if he read them or not.

Harry followed her closely behind, she could hear his footsteps. She wanted him to leave her alone right now. She could feel tears forming in her eyes again. She didn't want to fall apart in front of him. *Not now Hermione. Not now.*

"Hermione, wait!" she heard Harry say. She stopped and looked back, unable to control her anger any longer.

"What?" She pushed him in the chest hard but he only moved an inch. She pushed him again, harder. "Are you going to tell me I need to rest now? Are you going to tell me to let it go?"

Harry stared at her anxiously and didn't say anything.

"I can't let it go Harry! I can't even *sleep*! I can't close my eyes without seeing his face telling me how much he loved me, how much he loved us!"

She couldn't keep them in anymore. Her vision blurred from all the tears. She felt his arms wrap around her tightly at that moment.

"I just wish this was all a dream but it's not! It's all real! He's not here anymore! He's not —" She didn't even notice she had been pounding at his chest, letting it all out. She let the frustrations, grief and grief consume her.

She couldn't stop crying.

"I hear him say I love you guys, again and again! And then he's dying in front of me again and again. *And I can't even do anything about it*!"

She clutched his robes tight. Her legs started to collapse slowly and she felt herself slip further to the ground. Harry lifted her up.

She felt disgusted with herself for falling apart.

"I'm sorry," he whispered in a very sincere voice.

"Shh," he said. She could feel him brushing her hair in an attempt to calm her down.

"I'm sorry," Harry said repeatedly. "I'm sorry."

She looked up at him and pulled away immediately, shaking her head. She roughly wiped the tears in her eyes. "It's doesn't matter. You don't even believ—"

Harry reached for her again.

"Hermione I—I believe you."

Draco absentmindedly looked at his hand for the fifth consecutive time that day.

He was sitting in one of the large chairs in the Slytherin Common Room, trying to read *The Dark Arts, Beauty and Power*. There were a lot of curses he could use, but he couldn't seem to concentrate on what he was reading.

He still couldn't imagine himself, leaving those three dolts so easily, when he had been that angry… when he had been so sure he was going to kill them all.

And yet he hadn't killed them all.

The feel of her touch against his skin had such an intense effect on him. She always knew how to calm him.

She always knew how to make him feel warm.

His hand was… *cold* again, almost like it was dead.

But it hadn't been cold when she'd held it…

"Blaise," His voice came out eerily soft it was almost disturbing. Draco didn't bother looking at Blaise when he called his name. "People have hearts, don't they?"

Blaise stared at him in confusion, finding it odd that someone like him, Draco Malfoy, would ask such an inappropriate question.

"Yes," he answered in a small voice. "Of course they do."

Draco paused for a while. He looked like he was in deep thought. His eyes were still on the book, but Blaise had a feeling he wasn't reading it at all. Absentmindedly, he turned a page, the crisp sound of the parchment was heard from all the silence. "People like Pansy, or Crabbe, or Goyle?" he said quietly.

"Yes."

"And even you?"

Blaise paused for a while, evaluating his past actions. "Yes, I suppose so," he answered finally. His gaze never left Draco. He was curious as to where Draco was going with these questions. Draco finally looked at him, his face devoid of all emotions.

"What about me then? Do you think I have one?"

The question caught Blaise completely off guard.

This must be a joke, he thought. But the look Draco had on his face was anything but a joke. Blaise couldn't help but stare at him stupidly for a long time.

"I—I don't know," was all he could come up with. He was completely dumbfounded.

It was a cruel answer, really, but it was the truth. Draco was ruthless and evil in every way. Blaise knew Draco had killed and tortured people mercilessly many times before. And now he wanted to know if he had a heart?

What in Salazar's name was going on?

This was *Draco*. He was never the caring type.

Draco stared at him for a long time… And this his silver orbs gazed at his own hands. He seemed troubled and confused about something. Blaise wanted desperately to ask, but he stopped himself.

After what seemed like an hour, Draco finally closed his book and stood from his seat.

"Never mind what I just said." His cold voice returned.

With a swish of his black robes, he walked to the door.

———————————————————

Draco wondered aimlessly amongst the sea of people in the Hogwarts halls. He needed a distraction to get his mind off *her* for a while. He had to do something *productive…* or else he'd go mad.

He forced a laugh. He was already quite mad wasn't he?

Perhaps he can finish off those three Slytherins?

"Draco!" He heard someone call him. He ignored the voice and continued walking. "Draco, wait up!" he heard again.

He turned around irritably and saw Beige girl running towards him. Or was it Blue?

A brilliant plan popped in his head all of a sudden. He found a way to get rid of those three dolts and Lava Blue all at once. *Perfect.*

"Yes?" He forced a genuine smile. She stopped to catch her breath.

"I never got the chance to thank you about the roses you know?" she told him. He smirked at this. She didn't even realize that it was *her roses* that killed poor Ronnykins.

He shouldn't be surprised. He was cautious and thorough. No one would ever know it was him who killed Weasley if he didn't want them to.

"It was my pleasure," he said charmingly, careful not to blow his nice-guy cover. "Why don't we go somewhere… less crowded?"

"So let me get this straight," Harry said seriously. "Lavender murdered Ron? Lavender? Lavender Brown?" His voice reeked disbelief.

"No, Harry," Hermione said as she scanned through another thick book. "She just gave Ron the flowers that had caused his death."

"Doesn't that mean she murdered him?"

"Well not really," Hermione looked at him. "Somebody might have told her Ron likes roses or something of the sort. Besides, we're looking for the person who made him drink the poison, not the person who gave him the roses."

"Let's just ask Lavender then."

"We're not sure yet. I mean what if she's in cahoots with the murderer?"

"I don't think someone like her is capable of something like that Hermione."

"Someone once told me not to underestimate people like her," she said without thinking. She slapped her hand on her face when she remembered it was Malfoy who had lectured her on that one.

She was starting to think like him. *Oh Merlin.*

She shook her head and continued scanning through another book.

"There's nothing in here!" she said in frustration. "Nothing! We can't track the person who brewed the potion! All we know is that he is of pure blood and that's just not good enough!"

"I can think of a few people," Harry told her, while brushing his hand through his hair. "*Malfoy* making it to top of the list."

"Come to think of it…" Hermione said absentmindedly. Last night's images flashed in her mind: her being attacked, Malfoy *saving* her, Malfoy using the Cruciatus curse *without a wand*, and Malfoy's… beautiful… haunting…

"What?"

"I—nevermind."

She sat in the front row during her Muggle Studies class.

There were a few Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs at the back and the Ravenclaws sat with her on the front. She was early as usual, the professor wasn't even there yet. She still couldn't get her mind off Ron's murder.

The door slammed open and in came Draco Malfoy.

He had an evil gleam in his eyes today, but when had he never? Perhaps it bothered her more now because he looked, (in a sick, demented kind of way) somewhat *happy*.

…which was very, very bad news for her.

His gaze fell on her instantly and his mouth curved into another smirk.

The Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws giggled.

"Move," he told the person sitting on her right. The frightened boy did so hurriedly.

Even in his happiest moments, Malfoy still managed to invoke fear and anxiety.

"I've decided," he said arrogantly as soon as he was seated. "You're going to go out with me tomorrow night."

What?

"Are you serious?" She couldn't stop herself from laughing at his face. "Really?"

She immediately fell silent when he pulled her chair closer to his. Dangerously close.

"Does it look like I'm joking?" His voice was filled with venom. He had a calm smirk on the surface but she knew he was trying to control his temper.

"I can't. I have research," she lowered her voice and tried not to sound so scared.

"On what?"

"Why should I tell you?" she blurted out before she could even stop herself.

His devilishly handsome smirk widened.

"It must be that *top secret,* hmm?"

She shook her head defensively. Really, she wasn't good at lying at all.

He leaned in closer so that the others wouldn't hear his cold voice. She was tempted to lean away, but she wasn't about to let Malfoy know how much he scared her.

"Tell you what, princess," he started to say. He reached for her hair and twirled it in his fingers. She was as stiff as a board at his uncomfortable touch. "You come with me tomorrow and I promise I won't ask anything about your *confidential* research."

Maybe he wanted to get her alone so he could do something diabolical again, like manipulate her into hurting Harry or brainwash her into hating Ron.

"No."

"No?"

"Yes."

"Yes?"

"No, I meant yes." She slapped her hand on her face. "I mean, no, I meant no."

He smirked again. "Sure about that, Granger?"

She thought for a moment, weighing her options. She could use the easy way out and just tell him about her investigation of Ron's murder to avoid this. But Malfoy was one of the suspects. She can't afford to let him find out about her research.

And if she got closer to him maybe she could investigate on his powerful magic too. She had to know how he had used a Cruciatus curse without a wand.

She sighed.

"You won't pry into my research alright?" she said in defeat. A triumphant smirk came from his mouth.

"Swear on it," she told him seriously.

He placed a hand on his chest dramatically. "On my life."

"Fine," she muttered, somewhat unsure of her answer. He smirked once again and stood up, took one last look at her before heading out the door.

Hermione suddenly remembered that he wasn't in this class.

"You want me to fly? With you? Tonight?" she repeated nervously.

"I thought you were smart," he said irritably. He hopped on his broom and held out his hand to her. "Ride with me."

She gulped and backed away. "I—I don't think this is a good idea."

His face was calm but his eyes flashed irritation. He got off his broom and grabbed her wrist.

"Either you get in there willingly, or I drag you there. Your choice."

He was showing her one of those evil smiles again. The dangerous ones. She closed her eyes in nervousness. She felt like her feet were glued to the ground. She had seen him fly during Quidditch games many times before. It was anything but safe.

He was a reckless flier.

What have I gotten myself into?

How easily he could push her off the broom and make it look like an accident. She shivered at the thought. *No. Malfoy wouldn't do that.*

"I thought you never let any girl ride on your broom," she said, trying to put off the dreaded flying stick as long as she can. She suddenly felt nauseous. "Rumours."

"The rumours are true," he said in annoyance, dragging her roughly by the wrist. She groaned in pain. "But you're not just any girl Granger. I'll make an exception."

She wanted to run away and scream bloody murder.

"Hold me," he commanded when she was in place, and she did. *Might as well get this over with.*

"Tighter."

When she didn't follow, Malfoy yanked her hands causing her to crash on his back.

"Don't let go." She could feel him smirk even if she couldn't see his face. "You're going to enjoy this."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Sorry it took so long again XD homework…

This was supposed to be a 10 chapter story only, but I think I can't fit it all in just 10. So I decided to make it 13 or 15 or something. But not greater than 18. That would be too long for me.

Read and Review. Yay. :D

Thanks :D I LOVE YOU SO MUCH. I WANT TO HUG YOU ALL.

Chapter 9

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

"If you would just open your eyes Granger," he said irritably. "Maybe you would actually see this."

Hermione shook her head even though she knew Malfoy couldn't see her. The cold wind pierced her skin. She knew they were high up now and she felt like vomiting. Her eyes were shut tight. She hated flying.

"What if I fall?"

"What if you don't?"

"No."

"Trust me."

"Trust *you*?" A bitter laugh escaped her lips. "I'm not stupid."

Draco smirked at this. How right she was not to trust him.

"You agreed to *date* me, you know," he said, emphasizing the word 'date' far too much for her liking. "That means you'd trusted me then. Why not trust me now?"

"This is *not* a date!" she yelled back in defense. "This is just my free pass so you won't pry into my business."

"Open your eyes or I'll drop you."

Hermione should have known better, she shouldn't have ignored the seriousness of his voice… but apparently she was being stubborn tonight.

"No."

Suddenly, he made a quick turn, catching her off balance and making her topple off the blasted broom. She screamed but he caught her by the waist before completely falling to her death.

She was dangling a hundred feet in the air with only his arm keeping her up.

"Alright, alright I'll open them!"

He hauled her back to the broom easily, as if her weight was nothing. Her breathing was uneven. She wanted to cry. She hugged him so tight, she felt like her life depended on it.

Well… *it did*.

"You're crushing my organs!"

"You!" She pounded at his back hard. "Sadistic git! I almost died of a heart-attack!"

Malfoy actually had the *nerve* to laugh.

"Stop laughing!" she yelled in outrage. "Stop!"

Malfoy didn't stop, he only laughed louder. The laughter just plopped into his stomach and he couldn't stop. Hermione scowled, but after a while she started laughing with him too. His laugh was very contagious. It wasn't like the cold, empty laughs she usually heard from him.

It sounded rich and genuine… and *human*.

She found that she liked it very much.

Draco clutched his stomach and after what seemed like hours he stopped. He couldn't remember the last time he had laughed so hard.

"Are you done?" she said in a somewhat amused tone.

"Yes." he said, smiling still. Draco was shocked when he actually wiped a few tears in his eyes, tears of *bloody* laughter.

If he didn't see it for himself he wouldn't have believed it. Tears? From *laughing*?

"Oh Merlin Granger, you really are something."

"Why don't you do that more often?" he heard her say. He could feel her head resting on his back.

"Do what?"

"Laugh."

He paused for a while.

Because I never had a reason to.

He rushed forward and he heard her yelp in surprise. He flew past the quidditch field and the lake with such speed, it was downright frigthening.

"Malfoy, slow down!"

He didn't. He kept going until they passed the Forbidden Forest and kept going even as they passed Hogsmeade. His knuckles were white against the broom.

"Stop! I think I might throw up."

He slowed down finally. She sighed in relief.

She looked back and she could see the tips of the castle towers. They were so far from Hogwarts now.

A perfect place to kill someone. She grimaced at the thought.

"How do you keep doing this?" she heard him say in frustration. He was angry about something. That always seemed to be a bad thing.

"Doing what?" She clutched the wand in her robes in case he tries anything. She must've said something wrong.

"Making me feel…" he muttered under his breath.

She looked at his back questioningly, loosening the grip on her wand. "Feel what?"

"Just feel!" he yelled angrily, scaring her shitless. She almost fell off the broom again.

What did he mean by that?

"I—I don't understand."

He didn't answer. He turned around slowly and headed back.

The rest of the trip was awkward and silent. She didn't know what to say. She was still confused about everything, about this, about him.

He was a puzzle she wanted desperately to solve.

"Malfoy?"

"Look around, Granger."

The moment she did her jaw dropped.

She understood immediately why he wanted her to open her eyes. The lake was ablaze, reflecting the stars that looked like thousands of diamonds gleaming intensely in the black sky.

The lake, the sky, the stars… *everything* was utterly *beautiful*.

This is what he wanted to show me.

She laughed to herself when there was a fleeting instance where she thought Malfoy was actually being sweet. *I'm clearly losing my mind.*

"Why did you ask me out, Malfoy?" she asked amidst the silence. "What do you want from me?"

He didn't answer again.

They landed on the ground safely. Hermione had never been so happy to see solid ground. He looked at her one last time with those intense silver eyes. Then he leaned in and kissed her on the cheek like he did so many times before.

She shivered when she felt his cold breath on her ear.

"Everything."

———————————

"Want to go to the ball with me?"

She looked at Harry's green orbs questioningly. He had one of those one-cheek-grins she found so adorable. "What ball?"

"The Winter Masquerade. The one coming two weeks from now."

"And how come I've never heard of this ball?"

He looked at the book in front of her. "Because you're too busy with research."

She furrowed her eyebrows. "I don't have time for balls right now." She cringed at how wrong it sounded. Harry chuckled. "I have a lot of research to do."

"Time to take a break then. You've been at it for days now." Harry looked at her sympathetically, touching the bags under her eyes with his fingers.

"I don't want to."

"But you must." He closed the book and led her out the library. "Did you find anything?"

"Yes." The corridors were empty, save for a few second years passing by. "I've narrowed it down to four pureblood families that may be involved in the art of Poison-making. Notts, Harpers, Zabinis and the Malfoys. It's got to be one of them."

Lavander Brown walked to the Dungeons confidently.

She had a mission today. A mission only for her alone.

The Professor wasn't in yet, *perfect*. She walked in front of the class. Every pair of eyes turned towards her.

And that's when she found her targets. All three of them in Slytherin green robes, sitting casually together.

Kill them.

One by one she pointed her wand at them. They didn't know what hit them. With one last mention of "Avada Kedavra" a jet of green light came from her wand and the last one fell instantly.

The students around her were too shocked to do anything.

Her high-pitched laughter similar to Bellatrix's echoed as she headed out the classroom.

"Where are all the teachers?" They were in the Great Hall. There were only a few students now because it was still a bit too early for lunch. The chairs on the front, where the teachers always sat, were curiously empty.

Hermione shrugged. "Probably on a meeting or something. It's still a bit early for lunch anyways."

They sat on the Gryffindor table and loaded their plates "I asked Lavender about the roses," Harry mentioned while she ate a slice of blueberry pie.

"What?" She almost choked on her food. "When?"

"Last night," he said seriously. "I had to. I had to know."

"You weren't suppose to ask her!" she said angrily.

This could ruin everything. *Why did he think she was doing her best with this research?* She wanted to investigate this without Lavender knowing anything, but now that he asked Lavender…

"What did she say?"

"It's not her," he assured her. "She said she just heard the rumors that Ron liked roses."

"What if she pretended?"

"Stop being so paranoid about this," he said. "This is Lavender we're talking about. She may be a lot of things but she's no murderer. Besides, you already narrowed it down to four remember?"

BAM.

There was a loud explosion from the door and Hermione was startled from her seat. Everyone looked at the person standing right outside. *Speak of the devil.*

She had a crazy look in her eyes and she was holding her wand out.

She walked tipsily to the empty Headmistress chair, almost falling over some students as she made her way there.

"Lavender?" Hermione looked at Harry in confusion. He shrugged and grabbed her hand. He pulled her towards Lavender, who was now pushing the empty chairs of the teachers around and making a huge mess.

"What's going on Lavender?" Harry yelled at her.

"Get away from her Potter!"

They looked back and found all teachers in Hogwarts enter the Great Hall. They all had their wands out and were pointing at Lavender.

Professor Flitwick started leading the students to the outside of the Great Hall. Harry and Hermione stayed behind.

"Ms. Brown," Professor McGonagall said sternly. "Put your wand away."

"N-n-n-no!" Lavender was shaking. She looked positively mad. She was laughing one moment and crying the next. She kept clutching her head and pulling her hair. They tried to send several curses at her but it only backfired and she wasn't the least bit affected. It was as if an invisible barrier was protecting her.

What was going on?

Professor McGonagall calmly took a few steps forward.

"S-s-s-s-s-tay where you are!"

"Ms. Brown!" said Professor McGonagall again, more angrily this time.

"T-t-t-t-the voices," Lavender was laughing again. "T-t-t-t-t-eling m-m-m-m-e t-t-t-to…"

She didn't stop laughing.

"I-I-I-I-I-I-no!" Lavender said. She sounded like she was arguing with herself.

Then she pointed her wand at her head slowly and smiled.

"Harry stop her!" Hermione yelled at him. He rushed towards Lavender, but it was too late.

"*Bombarda.*"

"Still not sleeping?" She looked up from her covers and found his dark figure sitting on the foot of her bed. The aura of gloom that always seem to surround him made the hairs on her back stand.

"How did you get in?" She tried to make her voice sound as firm as possible but it came out as a small crack.

"Through the door." He snorted.

"I locked the door." *I even put wards in it.*

"I unlocked it." He said with a mocking tone, as if she was being stupid.

"Get off my bed."

"No."

She cursed under her breath and covered herself with the sheets. She had been trying to get some sleep but she couldn't seem to. The image of Lavender blowing her brains up all over the Great Hall kept replaying in her mind.

Lavender Brown had died by her own wand.

And she killed three people in the process.

Hermione didn't like Lavender very much but she didn't hate her either. She didn't know how troubled Lavender had been. In fact nobody knew. Professor McGonagall said she was bullied by the three Slytherins, that's why she killed them. And their other professors added that it was Ron's death that caused her to snap.

But was it really?

Lavender did mention voices before she died. *Voices.* Didn't that mean she was under a spell?

But there was no evidence that the Imperius Curse was used on her.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

She peeked from the covers. She stared at him with a curious look. "About Lavender?"

Draco smirked but he was sure she couldn't see him in the darkness. He was right, she *was* thinking about Blue's death.

Blue's death was one of his greatest masterpiece. It was bold, dramatic, and deliciously *morbid*. Everyone would remember it as a great tragedy, a sad and heart-breaking story of how a girl killed herself because of the pressures of life and other nonsense.

What they didn't know, however, was that it was all a show. She was merely Draco's *puppet*, disposed of because she was of no use to him any longer.

"Yes, and Weasley too."

She let the covers drop all the way to her waist. He started crawling towards her. She screamed but he covered her mouth with his hand almost instantly.

"Shh." He said quitely. She struggled against him. She tried to feel for her wand on the table beside her bed but she couldn't seem to find it.

"Don't scream," he warned her coldly. He sat beside her, their bodies touching. He was so close. Her eyes widened when she saw him twirling *her* wand against his fingers.

"Scared?"

"Go to hell," she said angrily, struggling to take back her wand from his hand.

He laughed coldly.

"I'm not going to *rape* you, Granger." He was enjoying this, he enjoyed seeing her shaken with fear and anger. "I just want to talk."

She really didn't feel comfortable with this position. She scooted away from him but he grabbed her by the waist and pulled her flush towards him.

"*Relax*." His voice was soft and oddly soothing in her ears and she started to feel sleepy.

"Talk to me about Blu—Lavender," she heard him say. She was only half-listening. Her eyelids felt heavy and she stiffled a yawn.

Why was she so sleepy all of a sudden?

"It was sad that Lavender killed herself," she managed to answer. "But just between you and me, I think—"

She yawned again.

No, she told herself desperately. *Stay awake!*

But she couldn't seem to anymore.

"You think?"

"I think she was murdered too." She rested her head on his chest, unable to control herself. If she wasn't so sleepy she wouldn't have missed the look of shock on his face. She started to drift off to sleep but he shook her slightly to keep her awake.

"Murdered too?" she heard him ask.

"Yes," she answered, "like Ron was."

Is that so?

Draco finally let her fall asleep on his chest. He brushed her soft hair between his fingers.

So she figured it out huh? He couldn't deny that he was rather impressed. He wondered how she found out. He had always been thorough.

No one, not even dear old McGonagall, suspected anything.

He smirked at how the events were turning out. It was getting interesting. He would let Hermione find out it was him, let her do her little research of how to destroy him.

And when she was sure she was rid of him, when she was sure she had won, he would strike back.

He was going to enjoy this.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Draco killed four people here. Sorry about that. But i did warn you, you know :p

I don't know if committing suicide with your own wand is possible in canon, but it's possible in this fic because I said so. hehe. XD

Sadly, this story's about to end. Just a few more chapters and it's done. Awww. D:

Read and review hun :) It's pointless to update without knowing what you guys think :)

Thank you :D i love you all :D

Chapter 10

She stirred a little.

Her palms were sweaty and she could feel her heart pounding against her chest. She remembered blood… *lots of it*… in her hands, on the floor, and all over her dress. She could taste its metallic tang in her mouth and feel its sticky dampness in her skin. She must've been crying then, because her vision was blurred wet. It all looked so real. And those stormy grey eyes…

But other than that, no matter how much she tried to remember, her dream stayed forgotten.

Slowly, she lifted her eyelids and she noticed a person sleeping beside her. Seconds later, she was screaming and toppling off the bed. The sheets accidentally wrapped around her, making it a struggle for her to stand.

He opened his eyes irritably, glared at her, turned to the other side of the bed, and went back to sleep.

"Malfoy!" she yelled at him in outrage, her cheeks were flushed and she was certain she looked like a mad person in a straight-jacket. She had been sleeping the whole night… *with him*?

He didn't move.

Why you slimy, little—

"Malfoy!" she yelled again, a little louder this time. "Malfoy!"

"Go back to bed, love," he grunted, not even bothering to spare her another glance. Hermione swore she popped an artery.

"If you keep being—if you don't get up, I—I'll—" She desperately tried to free her legs from the sheets. When she did so successfully, she went to for her wand but was utterly exasperated when it wasn't in the table beside her bed.

"You'll what?"

She shivered slightly when she saw him move slowly to face her. He used his right arm to keep himself upright, his knuckles supporting his head. He was acting like he owned the bed, the whole place for the love of Merlin. She wanted nothing more than to murder him, use her bare hands if she had too.

Because he was now twirling her wand, arrogantly, mind you, between his fingers.

"You'll kill me?" he asked happily, smirk plastered on his face yet again. Her face turned into an even deeper shade of red when realization dawned on her.

"Oh Merlin… did we?" She gasped.

He sniggered at her discomfort. He patted the spot beside the bed, signaling her to sit there. She crossed her arms and looked away.

"I'm not going to tell you if you just stand there," he said composedly.

"Nothing happened!" she yelled back, but was somewhat unsure of herself. He only chuckled and patted the spot beside him again.

"I—I was completely awake!" She paced around and mumbled, almost at the brink of hysteria. "I couldn't sleep! I didn't sleep. How? What was I thinking…?"

Draco stifled a yawn.

"Are you done babbling?" He was sure she wasn't going to sit on the bed (or very well go near it for that matter), not when he was still lying there anyways.

She jumped in alarm when she saw him stand, half-naked and all. He smirked.

"Stay back," she told him warningly. She was heading towards the door. The idea that she was this frightened of him was enough to make Draco sadistically happy.

He revels off her fear, no, he fuckin' lives for it. It tasted so deliciously *sweet*.

Just like everything about her.

"I used a sleeping charm."

"Bastard." She clenched her fists.

"Had to." He wasn't the least bit affected by her sudden swearing; in fact he even looked rather pleased with himself. He grabbed his robes and started putting them on. Hermione tried really hard not to stare at him. No matter how much she tried to deny it, Lavender and the rest of the Hogwarts female population were right. Draco Malfoy, was indeed gorgeous. "You look like a troll when you don't sleep."

"Ha, ha." She opened the door and motioned outside. "Get out."

He finished getting dressed and walked towards the door, stopped in front of her, stole a kiss on her lips, before walking away from her room with a swish of his dark robes.

She actually paused and stared in space for a few minutes before finally realizing what happened.

"Malfoy! Ugh!" She slammed the door shut.

"Your time's running out Draco."

"I know."

"You have to get rid of Potter."

"I know."

"Your 18th birthday's two weeks from now."

"Thank you, Zabini, for pointing out the obvious." Draco rolled his eyes at him. He glared at the first years staring at them as they climbed up the moving staircases. "You're not helping me with Granger."

"I am helping!" he hissed. "But there's just no getting through her head, that one. She's stubborn."

"Yes, she is quite stubborn, isn't she?"

If Blaise didn't believe it so impossible, he would've thought he saw a little smile creep up on Draco's lips.

He blinked again and it was gone. Blaise must've been seeing things.

Malfoys do not smile. Specially not Draco.

"What are you going to do if your plan fails?"

"It's not going to," Draco said confidently, looking at him as if he was being ridiculous. They were in their next class now. *Arithmancy, was it?* They lingered a little longer outside the front door. Blaise knew Draco was waiting for her again.

"That's it?" Blaise wanted to shake him. "No plan B?"

"Plan B, is the former plan A," Draco looked at him with his usual straight face and chilling eyes. "The plan before you so bravely convinced me otherwise. Force the *Malfoy Crest* on her skin…"

"You can't do that Malfoy!" he whispered irritably, looking around to make sure nobody heard them. "Why did you think I let you bloody pound me then, in the corridors? You were raving mad! Somebody had to stop you!"

"I can do whatever I want," Draco looked so sure of himself, it was frightening.

"This isn't some sick game Draco," he muttered angrily.

"I'm going to engrave it anyways, whether she likes it or not." He placed both his hands in his pockets. "We're only doing it your way because you said it would make things easier for me. This plan of yours is taking too long. Thankfully Zabini, I am a *patient* man, provided I get what I want in the end."

"Well if you went ahead with your original plan she's going to hate you forever."

Draco laughed coldly at his face. "And you think I care?"

"No, I just," Blaise frowned at him, "hoped that you've changed…" He muttered more to himself than to Draco.

Draco's face turned expressionless once more. Blaise's words seemed to annoy him somehow. *Change? Why?* Why would he ever want to? He was perfectly fine being a heartless monster.

"Ah look, there she is." Draco smirked and looked past his head. Blaise turned around and found Hermione walking hurriedly, with Potter close beside her. Blaise felt his blood boil at

the sight of him. Hermione's face fell when she saw the two of them, or rather; her face fell when she saw Draco.

"Sleep well last night princess?" Draco asked her in mock sweetness, completely ignoring Potter.

She glared at him intensely, but didn't say anything. Draco opened the door for her.

"See you later Harry," she said before disappearing inside the classroom.

Blaise followed her afterwards, not wanting to linger anywhere near Potter any longer.

"This class is for smart people only Potter," Draco said as he was about to go in. Potter grabbed his arm before he could even enter.

"Don't think I don't know what you're up to," he said coldly.

Draco snorted, making Potter grip his arm tighter.

"What do you think I'm up to exactly?"

"You're after Hermione."

"And you've realized this only now?" His tone of mock surprise pissed the hell out of him. "I thought you were sharper than that, Potter."

Draco looked extremely pleased with the expression of anger in Potter's face. He was belittling him, making him feel like he was nothing but dirt under his shoes. Well… *he was*.

"Whatever you're planning I'm going to stop you," Potter hissed. Draco pulled his arm away, and dusted it with his hand in disgust.

"Go ahead and try." He smirked and headed inside.

Harry punched the wall beside him, causing a throbbing pain in his right hand. Malfoy really knew how to get in his nerves.

"Stop it," she whispered irritably at him.

They were sitting in Arithmancy. Malfoy had his chair so close next to her, their legs were touching. He had forced her to sit at the back the moment he entered the room, dragged her there when she didn't stand up..

Now his hand, to her horror, was touching her knee.

He only smirked and it went higher.

"Stop," she warned him again. She slapped his hand away but it kept moving higher. It was now on her mid thigh.

"Malfoy!" she yelled.

"Ms. Granger? Mr. Malfoy?" The professor looked at them curiously and so did everyone else in the class. She blushed furiously and shook her head in embarrassment.

"Nothing professor," Malfoy said with a small smirk on his lips.

The Slytherin girls on her right glared at her.

Hermione banged her head in the table miserably. Malfoy had been tormenting her for past couple of days now. He was getting more and more aggressive and less and less modest about his attempts to mess with her head.

She slapped his hand away again and this time, he dropped it. He was much more interested in playing with her hair now.

There was no use telling him off. Better her hair than her leg…

She decided to question him. She had to know how he became so skilled in wandless magic.

"So—uhm— you trained with your father when you were young?" she said quietly. Her cheek was pressed against her desk and she was looking up at him.

"Yes," he said absentmindedly, brushing her long hair.

"Anyone else you trained with?"

"Lucius hired different tutors when I was young and they trained me," he said simply. She noticed how he called his father by his first name. So does that mean he hated Lucius? He traced his fingers against her cheek. She flinched but kept on going.

"What about—er— now? You still train right?" She tried to sound as casual as possible. He looked uninterested in their conversation and he continued playing with her hair.

Then suddenly, their eyes met and she saw the cold, condescending look in his eyes, making her shift uncomfortably in her seat.

"In the dark arts, yes. It turns out I'm really good at it too," he said dangerously. Her eyes widened at his words. "I know you want to know more about me, Hermione. *I'm flattered*."

She didn't miss the cruel sarcasm in his voice.

She blushed and sat upright immediately. She didn't dare look at him for the rest of the class.

The Malfoy family is an old and aristocratic wizarding family. They live in Malfoy Manor, a large, ornate house which has been in the family for generations. The Malfoys are extremely wealthy…

They are known for their strong belief in pureblood supremacy…

She snorted.

…excel in the field of Occlumency…

…they practice the art of Poison-making. Amorentia, Conflagration d'Ame, Ipheion, Moonseed—

"Hermione?"

She closed the book shut and nervously turned her gaze towards the voice. She hid the book in her back.

"What are you doing?" Blaise asked curiously, eyeing her in suspicion.

"N-nothing." She could feel herself shaking. It all made sense. She had heard Parvati and Lavender talking about him before. He injured Ron at Quidditch, therefore forcing Ron to stay in the Hospital Wing so people would send him flowers.

…so they wouldn't suspect if someone sent the roses, they wouldn't even think that those roses would kill Ron.

It was ingenious, it was devious, it was absolutely *cunning*. She felt anger boil inside of her, far worse than any anger she have ever felt in her entire existence.

Malfoy did this. *Draco Malfoy killed Ron.*

"Let me see." Blaise motioned forward, snapping her out of her thoughts. She backed away from him instantly.

"Blaise," she warned. He wouldn't back off and by defense instinct, she raised her wand. His eyes widened at the sight of it and he raised both his hands in surrender.

She stared at him cautiously as she started to inch away. Blaise saw the book she was holding and looked at her meaningfully.

"Is this about Draco?" he said suddenly. She stopped in her tracks.

"How much do you know?" he asked.

"A lot of things."

"I know a lot of things too."

"I know he killed Ron," she said in an accusing tone, "used Quidditch and Lavender to do it."

Blaise didn't flinch. *Does this mean she was right? Does this mean he knew?*

She didn't move when he offered her a seat. She did however, stare at him straight in the eyes. His face suddenly looked at her with new found admiration. It was as if he was suddenly seeing her in a whole new light or something.

"How did you know?" There was an amused grin on his face. "Nobody suspected. And I'm pretty sure Draco didn't let anything slip, so how?"

"I saw the black roses."

"Black roses?" He looked quite confused.

"The sign that a person has been poisoned," she answered. Blaise noticed she still had her wand out. "Moonseed poisoning."

"And you traced it back to him?" The tone of amusement never left his voice. "Such intellect—"

"How did *you* know?" she hissed, not trusting him the slightest. He laughed softly and rested his elbows on the table, head on his hands.

Draco didn't want anyone to find out, least of all Hermione, and yet here she was.

"He trusts me," he said simply.

"Then I don't trust you."

"He did it, not me!" he muttered in annoyance. "I had nothing to do with it!"

"Yes but you knew! You knew this all along and you never told anyone!"

"Tell anyone?" He looked at her disbelievingly as if suggesting it would damn her very soul. "And get myself killed?"

"You could've told me!" she said in annoyance. "I could've done something! I could've saved Ron!"

He frowned at her slightly. Her mind was buzzing with thoughts on how to destroy Malfoy once and for all, causing her knuckles to turn white against her wand. Blaise's eyes darted to her hand.

"You can't stop him, if that's what you want to do," he said slowly.

"Why?" she said angrily. "Why can't I?"

"Are you being stupid?" He gave her another disbelieving look. "You've seen what he could do! Do you really think you would stand a chance?"

She glared at him for his lack of faith in her abilities.

But she remembered the night in the restricted area. How Malfoy used the Cruciatus curse on those three Slytherins without a wand, how he watched them suffer *without mercy*, how his eyes were *burning and cold* at the same time.

Blaise was right. She wouldn't stand a chance.

"I don't care. I'll get him back for this." Her voice came out determined. Blaise rolled his eyes.

Blaise didn't want her to succeed, truth be told. He wanted to help Draco. He wanted Potter dead. Yet somehow, a part of him was a little impressed by her courage. Her eyes were ablaze with resolve. It takes a lot of willpower to stand up to someone like Draco.

But if she wasn't careful, she was going to get herself killed. Or worse…

He felt bad for her. He didn't want her to suffer. He was quite fond of her after all.

Blaise was a keen observer. He loved studying people and their surroundings. He loved watching them handle situations and problems. It was this attitude that made everyone around him vulnerable. He knew almost everyone, their strengths, their weaknesses, their fears…

Everyone, except a few others.

And Hermione Granger was one of those few.

I wonder…

He wanted to see what Hermione will do when she finds out, and he wanted to see what Draco will do too.

In other words, he let his curiosity get the best of him.

"Have you heard of the Luteus stone, Hermione?"

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Blaise. Well, he's a confusing character. He likes complexities and he likes to observe people the most.

I'm going to type more about the Malfoy Crest in the next chapter, sorry about all that confusion :D

Read and Review again :) thank you.

I love you all :)

Chapter 11

Harry didn't take the news too well.

In fact he was outraged. Well, that was a given. He didn't say anything for a while. She stared at the seriousness of his face, his emerald green orbs gazing at the vast Hogwarts Quidditch fields. The sun was just starting to rise and they were seated in one of the benches. It was the perfect time for a heart-to-heart, a confession. The air was cold against her skin, her breath was visible as it left her lips.

Harry was quiet the whole time she reluctantly told him everything.

…The fight Blaise and Malfoy had and the kiss…

…How Malfoy kept messing with her head…

…What really happened when she was researching moonseed poisons in the restricted area…

…How Malfoy killed Ron…

Everything.

She could see a mix of anger and disappointment on his face and the guilt flooded over her instantly. She waited for his reaction, but a few minutes passed and nothing.

"Please say something."

He brushed his hand on his hair then, laughing bitterly at the whole situation as if it was some sick joke she made just to spite him.

"You didn't trust me enough to tell me all this," he stated bitterly, finally gazing at her full on. "You didn't tell me about *him*."

"I tried to tell you," she said in defense. "You told me he was being mental."

"That's beyond the point!" She jumped at the sudden loudness of his voice. He glared at her and clenched his fists.

"I-I didn't think he was serious."

"Not serious?" He stood up and started pacing in front of her. "He kisses you *twice*, blackmails you to fly with him, *sleeps on your bed* and you tell me he's not serious?"

"I-I don't know… I was embarrassed."

"What about the Cruciatus huh, Hermione? When were you going to tell me about that?"

"I thought I could handle it!"

"WELL YOU OBVIOUSLY COULDN'T!"

He was breathing heavily and his face was flushed. Hermione saw the pure rage etched in his features.

She couldn't hide the hurt she felt at his words. If anything, he was right. She should've asked for his help. But she knew some part of her didn't want him involved. Call it her protective nature, she just didn't want Harry to go through with this all over again. She wanted him to have a normal year. But now it got so out of hand.

She buried her face in her hands and groaned.

"I'm sorry," she said miserably.

Harry stopped pacing. She felt him sit beside her and sigh. He touched the small of her back. She stared at him and saw that his features had softened.

"We have to stop him," he told her. "We have to ask for help this time, from McGonagall, from the Aurors."

"But we don't have proof."

"We don't need proof," he said confidently. She saw a determined look on his face. Harry knew what he was doing.

"I've been hearing rumours." Ginny sat beside her and started to fill her plate. "Are you and Malfoy—?"

Hermione slammed her goblet in the table, startling a few students beside her in the process. She raised an eyebrow at the redhead. "Are you seriously asking me that question?"

"You sure?" Ginny looked unconvinced. "The whole school's on a fuss about it, even the teachers. There's even this rumor going on that he let you ride his broom and everyone knows he never lets anyone touch that thing."

Hermione grimaced but said nothing. She took another bite out of her chicken legs, wanting to forget about the subject. She thought of telling Ginny everything, she did have the right to know after all. But Harry said not to tell anyone. He seemed to be confident about the plan he had in mind.

"I mean, it's okay if you guys are, you know." Ginny nudged her lightly in the arm, a gesture of encouragement. She choked on her food at the thought of Ginny being alright with the idea of her and Malfoy, *dating*. Ginny ignored her choking. "War's over. Nobody cares if you're dating Slytherin, and besides he's got a nice piece of—"

"How're you?" Hermione said all too suddenly.

"I've been doing okay…" she replied, her voice trailing off. Hermione dropped it, noticing the sudden change in atmosphere. She forgot that Ginny was still a little depressed.

"We can go to Hogsmeade together this weekend?" Hermione said, hoping to cheer her up. Ginny's face brightened a little.

"We need dress robes for the ball, yeah?" she said excitedly.

"Dress robes?"

"The Winter Masquerade, Hermione."

Hermione frowned. She wasn't really in the mood to go to some ball. Not when she still had a murderer to take down. But Ginny looked so happy, and this could be a way to help her recover from her brother's death.

"Fine then," she replied in defeat. "This Saturday?"

Hermione researched about the Luteus stone one more time but to no avail.

Harry helped her whenever he could but they weren't making any progress. There was absolutely no information whatsoever about the said stone, it was as if it never existed. She must've missed something.

Thankfully, Malfoy was true to his word of not prying into her business and he didn't bother her whenever she was in the library.

So she spent most of the time there. Partly for the research, partly because she wanted to avoid him.

If they wanted to stop Malfoy they needed all the information they could get. It was dangerous to confront him about it now, because they didn't exactly know how powerful he was yet.

If he could do a Cruciatus on three people at once, Godric only knows what else he could do. Would it be possible to do a killing curse three people at once too? What if he can do more than three?

The notion made her a little uneasy.

He was dangerous and powerful and he wasn't the most merciful person.

But she did see him slip from his facade of indifference and cruelty once or twice, when they had flown together and when she had tightly held his hand.

Unconsciously, Hermione stared at her own hand.

She was angry at Malfoy at first when she found out what he did to Ron. She even considered cursing the hell out of him, not caring about expulsion or Azkaban anymore. But after a while she'd calmed down and thought about it. There must be some reason why he was doing this.

Malfoy, no, *Draco*, no matter how evil he was, was still human. She didn't believe that there was no hope left for him. Dumbledore had told them so, and Hermione believed him. She would help Draco come back to the their side. She had already caught a glimpse of him once or twice, in his eyes. He was still in there somewhere, beneath all that monstrosity…

She just had to find him.

A couple of hours passed and she rubbed her fingers against her eyelids, still no information about the stone. She looked at her muggle watch and left the library. She and

Harry promised to visit Hagrid in 30 minutes.

She wanted to come earlier though, to do some research on the bugleweed near Hagrd's hut for her potions project.

Hermione walked outside the castle hurriedly and when she neared the bugleweeds, screamed when someone jumped from the tree, right front of her.

It was a frightening sight, to see him so close when you know what he had done, what he could do. She grimaced, how he looked so calm and collected, so at ease after everything that has happened. Like his conscience was asleep, like he didn't have a conscience at all.

But she knew better.

He sneered at her nervousness.

"You've been avoiding me."

She tried to pass through but he wouldn't let her. His figure towered over her, making her feel powerless and inferior, but she stood her ground. She had to show him she wasn't afraid of him. Even though deep down she wanted to bloody *run*.

"I was busy and stressed." It took all the courage she could muster to finally stare at him in the eyes. His face was as handsome as ever, no stress marred his features at all. She shivered slightly at his cold glare.

"Really?" He stepped closer, trapping her effectively against the tree. "How about I help you relax then?"

Hermione didn't know why but she didn't move. She just felt like she was high all of a sudden, like she was in a sort of trance. She did nothing as his arms wrapped around her and pulled her towards him. She wanted to push him away but she couldn't seem to move on her own.

"I turn 18 next week you know." His forehead was pressed against hers and she could feel his breath tickling her skin.

"Mhmm," she said in a daze. Her mouth seemed to have a life of its own. She felt her energy being sucked out of her. He leaned forward and started tracing little kisses on her lips. It felt quite good actually, he was so gentle. She let her hands touch his hair. *She did feel relaxed.*

"I have to—" he said in between kisses, his voice was gruff, "marry by then…" His hands roamed around her body, on her shoulders, on her chest, on her waist and on her thighs. "A lot of women would die to have me—" she felt her skin burn at his every touch, felt her back arch towards him, "But I don't want them."

His kisses turned more demanding, more driven. He deepened it and started nipping and biting, hungry for more. Her scent was addicting, her soft moans were like music to his ears. He felt his hands slide higher and higher up her skirt.

"They're not you."

Her body shivered in horror when she tried to register what he had just said. If Harry was right about Malfoy coming after her, then that must mean…

She seemed to snap out of it a little. "N—no, get off me." She was starting to come around. Her knees still felt like jelly but she was starting to regain her strength. She forced herself to wake from her trance. She struggled more and more against him, pounding at his back and pulling his hair. He didn't seem to mind, only kissing her harder and grabbing her wrists.

She wanted to scream but she couldn't, so she did the only thing she could think of. She bit his tongue *hard*.

This made him back away from her in mild surprise. She almost fell to her knees without his body against her. She grabbed the tree with her right hand for support, her body bent forward, her other hand was clutching her thigh.

Her breathing was uneven.

"I won't—" She still felt a little weak and her mind was still a little foggy.

She forced her eyes to look at him, only to see him smirk again, the look of amazement evident in his face. She struggled to stand erect but she almost fell down again.

"You won't?"

"I won't marry you!" she yelled back at him.

He only chuckled at her little retort. "Oh but you will." He placed his hands in his pockets, watching her with all interest. "You're in denial, but deep down you know you're going to—"

She screamed before he could finish, not wanting to hear anymore. She tried to tell herself he was brainwashing her again. Malfoy was manipulating her into doing what he wanted. His voice was sickeningly sweet in her ears, hypnotizing her into believing every word, every lie.

Draco couldn't contain his glee. She was so feisty, that one. He was sniggering at her discomfort, trying to see what she would do next. She grabbed her wand with much difficulty.

She probably knew it was useless to curse him but she did it anyways. She even broke free from his control. Had it been some other girl, he would've gotten what he wanted long ago.

But Hermione was different, she was never boring, she was always a challenge.

It was admirable, really. Next time though, she wouldn't be so lucky.

"Oi! Malfoy! Don't touch her!" Like mushrooms that always sprout out of nowhere, the-boy-who-just-wouldn't-fucking-die came running towards them, ruining all his fun. Potter grabbed her by the arm at the same time aiming his wand at Draco.

Draco raised an eyebrow.

"It's alright Harry." She hung on to him for support which seemed to irritate Draco a little, but his expressionless face never gave anything away. "I'm fine."

"You stay away from her," Harry said angrily.

I'm going to kill you soon, Potter.

The very thought stopped Draco from hexing the bloody git in front of him. He smirked at Potter again, walking away slowly with a swish of his dark robes.

Soon.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Yay, we made it to chapter 11! I'm so happy :D

I wonder if Draco should kill Harry though…

Oi! Read and Review ! I love hearing from you guys :)

Thanks everyone :D

I love you all :)

Chapter 12

DEATH EATERS FACE DEATH PENALTY

Hermione immediately looked over the Slytherin table after reading the headline. He was already standing up and hurrying towards the double doors. She hurried out of her seat and followed him, ignoring the curious stare of Harry as she left.

Blaise smashed a large vase against the wall of their Common room, waved his wand to fix it, then carelessly and angrily threw it back again.

He didn't look up when she entered.

"This is all Potter's fault you know." He said visciously, throwing the vase with such force that she jumped at the sound. She had never seen him this angry before. "I could care less about what happened to *daddy dearest*, but my mother…"

"You can't blame this on Harry." Hermione said quietly.

Blaise laughed bitterly. "Potter accused my mum of crimes she never committed."

Hermione looked at him disbelievingly. She wanted to comfort him a while ago, but he looked like he didn't need comforting after all. He was much too angry at the moment.

"We weren't even here during the war. Go on, ask him. Maybe then you'll know he isn't such a saint after all."

He walked out the Common room and slammed the door shut.

"You knew it was going to happen someday." Draco told him. He was sitting casually in the couch when Blaise arrived in the Slytherin Common Room. Pansy stood behind his chair, massaging his shoulders. Draco was practicing a dark spell on an unfortunate third year who was on his knees, screaming without a sound and clutching his head desperately.

Every Slytherin who passed by walked hurriedly and they didn't dare look at Draco in the eyes.

"What spell is that?" Blaise said, not bothering to look at the pityful third year as he occupied an empty chair beside Draco. He didn't approve of Draco's cruelty but it was useless to try and stop him anyways.

"Timor." Draco said lazily. "Fascinating spell, it's fear. It can pry open your mind, make you see what you fear the most, over and over."

"Any countercurses I should know of?"

"That's the beauty of it." Draco smirked. Pansy giggled. 'There are none.' Then he lifted the curse off, the third year fainted. "How's your mother?"

"She's about to die." He clenched his fists. He wanted nothing more than to take all his anger out on Potter. He was going to make sure he dies. "But let's not talk about that. Let's

talk about your birthday."

"Why Blaise, I didn't know you cared." Draco said sarcastically. "If for some very unfortunate reason that this plan should fail, I'll go with plan B." Blaise shook his head.

"No, no. No plan B." He grimaced at the thought of Hermione being forced to marry. He wondered what she was going to do to protect herself.

It was going to be a great battle between Hermone and Draco. Blaise told her about the stone because he didn't want her to face him unprepared.

"I decide, Zabini, not you." Draco clicked his tongue. Blaise frowned.

His split side of wanting Draco to kill Harry, but not wanting Draco to marry Hermione confused him. It was like he wanted Draco to half-win, half lose.

"Force the Malfoy family crest on her skin."

"Malfoy family crest?" Pansy looked at Draco questioningly.

Draco looked at her as if she was being stupid. "Our family crest. It's our tradition during marriage. My mother had one on her arm."

"Like a dark mark?"

"Yes." Draco seemed irritated by this. He didn't want to be associated with anything that had to do with Voldie. Even though Voldie fulfilled his purpose well of helping Draco gain full power.

"How are you going to kill Potter?"

"Painfully." An evil gleam flashed in his eyes.

The dress was white.

Like snow, it was. It showed the bare of her back and her shoulders. The intricate details on the side made it glitter against the light. It was beautiful, its satin fabric was soft against her skin, clinging to her every curve as if it was flowing water. It was perfect.

She tilted her head a little.

"Blimey Hermione, you look gorgeous!" Hermione looked at the side of the mirror to find Ginny standing by the doorway. She was smiling at her and she absent-mindedly smiled back. "You should get it, I was thinking of turning you into a swan, we could go get masks in the other shop, it's not far from here actually, you know that shop where they make…"

She wasn't really listening. She wasn't thinking about the dress or the ball at all. She was thinking about Harry. When she confronted him about Blaise's parents, his face was blank. Did he really accuse Blaise's parents of false crimes? No wonder Blaise hated him so much.

And there was still no information on how to stop the Luteus stone. She struggled to take the dress off.

"Hermione?" Hermione jumped.

"Oh sorry, I was spacing out again." She shook her head furiously.

"It's okay." Ginny was beside her facing the huge mirror. The dress she was wearing looked positively '*whorish*'. Hermione laughed at the look of disgust plastered on Ginny's face as she turned around and examined it. "Ugh. Maybe I should go as a raven instead, black looks good with my hair you know, and it's only right that I wear black since Ron…"

She trailed off again. Hermione frowned. She walked over to Ginny and patted her back. "You should go as a butterfly."

Ginny looked at her curiousy. "A butterfly?" Then she grinned, "Why?"

Hermione shrugged. "I don't know, exactly. It just came to me." The suggestion was so random, Ginny had to laugh.

"Alright then Hermione. I'll take your word for it." She took the slutty dress off and put on her robes. "Let's look around, maybe we'll find something here."

Ginny was in a good mood for the rest of the time she was trying on more dresses. Hermione decided to buy the white dress because she was a tad bit lazy to try anything else on. Ginny found the perfect butterfly dress an hour later. She looked absolutely stunning.

They were about to pay for everything when Hermione saw someone through the shop's wide glass window, walking strangely fast and almost unnoticed by everyone else.

He was wearing a thick black coat and his hands were on its pockets. His hair of platinum blond was messy, face held an expressionless look but his mouth was slightly curved into a sneer. He looked like he had just accomplished something of great importance. She heard her heart pound in nervousness. She left the shop hurriedly, ignoring Ginny's voice as she ran after him.

His white shirt beneath his coat, there was blood all over it.

He headed towards the Three Broomsticks and she rushed after him. "Stop!" She yelled. He immediately turned his head back and when he caught a glimpse of her, he smirked. He walked towards her, his coat was already closed.

"Hello, princess." Before she had the chance to do anything else, he had already draped his arm possessively on her shoulders. "What a pleasant surprise. I'd know that voice anywhere."

She slapped his hand off her and angrily tried to undo the buttons of his coat. He draped his arm around her again, grabbed her hands and kissed them.

"I know how much you want me, but not now." He smirked at everyone who walked passed them. She blushed when people started to give them knowing looks. She elbowed him on the stomach but he didn't even flinch. Suddenly, he dragged her to a table on the far corner. Blaise Zabini, Pansy Parkinson and three other Slytherins were there.

"Late as always." Blaise said, looking rather annoyed. He was shocked when he saw her. "Hermione?"

"Look, I have to talk to you!" She told Malfoy angrily, completely ignoring Blaise.

"Later." He forced her to sit on the chair beside him but she stood up again.

"No. Now."

"Sit." He said again, more menacingly this time. His voice was demanding and his eyes darkened. She cursed under her breath irritably and sat down again.

"Why is there a filthy mudblood here?" Pansy blurted suddenly. Blaise's eyes widened and knudged her hard in the arm. Malfoy gave her a terribly frightening look that immediately made her cower in her seat, the other three Slytherins avoided Malfoy's eyes.

"Shut up."

Pansy didn't say anything after that.

"The ingredients?" Malfoy asked. He was holding Hermione's thigh under the table. She wanted desperately to get out of there. "Are they enough?"

The Slytherin with the brown hair nodded nervously, looking at Hermione then at Malfoy. He seemed to be thinking of the right choice of words. "It's — uh— almost done."

Malfoy smirked. "Good. It's only a matter of-fuck!"

She just stepped on his foot hard.

He looked at her irritably. "Excuse us." He grabbed her by the arm and led her outside, in a dark alleyway beside the shop where nobody could see them.

"What?"

She tried to undo the buttons of his coat again. He didn't stop her this time. She paled when she saw the blood. It was real.

"Oh, about that." He clicked his tongue. He took her hands off his shirt and closed the coat calmly. "A wolf died just outside the Forbidden forest when I was passing by and I tripped on it. It messed up my shirt, see."

"Liar." She hissed, she was shaking with anger. He was just so… so *calm*, it infuriated her. She grabbed her wand and pointed at his chest, "What did you do?"

He raised an eyebrow. "You're being stupid. You know that *stick* won't affect me."

She bit her lip but didn't lower her wand. He was right. With the stone inside him, her magic was probably nothing on him but she only held the wand tighter. She didn't take the idea of being insulted too lightly.

"I killed a couple of centaurs, if you must know." He said casually as if it was a normal thing to do. His composed tone irritated her all the more.

"That was you?" She said in outrage.

"*Yes*." He said, never moving his condescending gaze away from her. "Now about this Saturday…"

"You're delusional." She suddenly realized how alone they were in this dark alley. She backed up a little. "My mind's made up."

"Granger, Granger, Granger." He placed his hands in his pockets. "You and I both know what happens in the end. Why can't you just make this easier for me?"

He walked over to her slowly but Hermione placed her hand on his chest to keep him away.

"I would rather die." Her voice filled with venom. Her eyes beamed with determination. He laughed bitterly, a cold malice flashed in his eyes. He advanced forward, crushing her against the wall with his body.

"You know you don't stand a chance against me." He whispered. She struggled against him.

"Besides, I know you're *dying* to know… how *easily* I killed Weasley."

Malfoy was sent flying to the wall seconds later. Her arm outstretched, her knuckles white against her wand and her whole body shaking. The curse hit him square in the chest. He was on the ground.

Hermione felt an unimaginable feeling of triumph flood over her. She wanted to see him hurt more, to make him suffer the same pain Ron did. She wanted to kill him.

"I'm going to *destroy* you." She hissed.

Her little victory was short lived, however, because he was on his feet again. She sent another curse but he sheilded himself this time.

"I ordered the beaters to attack him in Quidditch so that no one would suspect the roses."

More curses, just send him more.

"Shut up!"

"He felt all that pain, you know, when all that blood slowly, *forcibly* left his bod—"

She screamed and clutched her head desperately. The image of Ron dying formed in her mind.

"And he screamed and screamed in the restricted area, when I crucioed him over and ov —"

"Stop!"

He was laughing coldly again. She covered her ears desperately. She felt her head throb, felt her heart race, felt her teeth sink in her lips. She had never felt so much anger for a person in her life. She *hated* Draco Malfoy. She *hated* him.

"*Crucio.*"

Malfoy stopped talking and for a minute she felt so relieved. He was on his knees, eyes closed like a silent prayer, hands still hidden lazily in his pockets. She didn't really know. The pain must've been unbearable but she just felt numb.

Her mind went blank. She could feel the tears on her cheeks and she couldn't seem to stop crying. He did this. He was to blame.

More.

He must suffer *more*.

His face looked absolutely calm still, but the slight twitch of his lip gave him away. He groaned in pain and she felt a sick pleasure hearing it. He opened his grey eyes slowly and with difficulty, curled his lips into another condescending smirk that looked so unbelievably twisted and sadistic, she backed a few steps.

Then she dropped her wand in sudden fear and realization. The curse had been lifted off but that sickly sweet voice that caused it just a while ago, it didn't come from *him*.

What have I-?

"Yes, you have just sent a *Cruciatus Curse* on me Hermione." His eyes were practically dancing in glee. "And a very strong one too. *I'm so proud.*"

He was on his feet again. Her hand was on her mouth.

She ran.

"Are you sure about this Harry?"

"Yes, minister, don't you think I would absolutely make sure about everything before coming here?"

"But Draco Malfoy—"

"was a former death eater." Harry interrupted, looking at him seriously. "Hermione said he didn't have a dark mark in his arm but he must've done something to get it off."

"And he murdered Ron Weasley using moonseed? Merlin's beard…"

"We're not sure if Ron's the only one he…" Harry paused. He didn't like mentioning Ron's murder. "He might've killed Lavender Brown and three other Slytherins."

"But why do you think he's doing this?"

Harry didn't answer. He wanted to say that Malfoy was after Hermione, but to have him go through such lengths just to get her was too much. Why doesn't he just kidnap her and take her away?

Maybe he was after something else too?

He wasn't going to let Malfoy win, that was for sure. He had already taken Ron, he was *not* going to take Hermione.

They talked for almost an hour and by the time they were done, Harry was convinced that everything was going to work.

"We'll further investigate on the matter." Kingsley said. Harry nodded and thanked him. "I'll contact the Order."

"Oh, and minister," He said before completely walking out the door. "Zabini? She's not a death eater. You can let her go."

Then he left, just like that.

The next issue of the Daily Prophet had a picture of a very pretty woman with black locks, smiling as she freely left Azkaban, unscathed.

———————————

She arrived at the Head Common Room finally. The whole day was a blur, her mind was blank. She saw Ginny inside, sitting in the coach by the fire, having what seemed to be a casual conversation with Blaise.

If Hermione wasn't so confused about everything that had just happened she would have asked. Ginny was the first one to notice her.

"Where were you?" she said, standing up to hug her. "You disappeared on me! I looked everywhere."

"I'm really sorry Ginny." She hugged back, giving Blaise a questioning look over Ginny's shoulder. He just shrugged. "I wasn't feeling well, that's all."

"Oh." To her relief, Ginny nodded in understanding, despite her lame excuse. Hermione didn't really want to talk at the moment. She wanted to just lie down and rest. Ginny gave her one of those we'll-talk-later looks, then frowned. "I couldn't buy your dress, I didn't have enough money with me when you ran off."

"It's okay. I'll just use the old one." Ginny looked taken aback. Hermione cut her off before she could say anything else. "I'm just tired Gin, I'm going to go to bed now."

"Alright." Ginny replied, disappointed. "I'm going to stay a while, if that's fine with you."

Hermione didn't really care. Ginny took a seat next to Blaise again and they started talking. She looked back at the odd pair one last time before heading up her room.

There was a package in her bed, a black box tied with a silver bow.

She checked the box for any curses, or anything that might cause her harm but there was nothing.

She opened it and found the beautiful, white dress she wore just a while ago.

She closed it again and looked for a card or a letter but all she could find was a weird symbol embossed in the bottom of the box. There were intricate lines and patterns forming around a twisted looking M, right smack in the middle.

Where have I seen this before?

———————————

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Canon aside, yes i'm moving Draco's birthday next week instead of the original june. it seemed to fit the story :p

About Harry, well a lot of you said i should kill him and a lot of you said i shouldn't too. I already know what i'm going to do, after thinking about it. thanks for the suggestions, they helped a lot :)

Draco created a new spell, he used it twice in the story already, both when he said "relax." It's mind manipulation :D (brainwashing)

His brainwashing is getting better and better too. Or was that just Hermione's evil side that happened there? What do you guys think?

My longest chapter so far :) message me for the errors :)

read and review love ! yay. come here you! give me a hug :D

Chapter 13

The Room for Requirement was almost empty of everything when she entered. It was plain and barren, except for a comfortable looking couch, a fireplace and a table in the middle. Hurriedly she entered, eager at the sight of a thick, old-looking book placed neatly in the table. She settled on the couch comfortably and opened it.

She thought it wouldn't work but by some miracle, the only book in the world that held information about the Luteus stone was now in her hands.

The Luteus stone, known to intensify the powers of the owner.

It is different, because unlike the other stones it is inserted inside the one who wishes to obtain its powers.

She frowned at this.

Its various uses range from wandless magic to untraceable curses (it is very unclear what exact magic it can display).

It was banned by the Ministry of Magic because of its uncanny dark properties, branded under Dark objects by the year 1760, and was kept locked in the ministry, never to be used again.

He probably stole it there some time ago…

Only through the Removal spell can the stone be removed from ones body, but there is only a faint chance that it might work.

She turned the other page but there was no more.

A faint chance? What if it didn't work? What if it backfired and Malfoy kills them all for even trying? The Removal spell was a complex spell after all. It needed pure concentration and powerful magic before one can do it. It was hard enough using it on small objects, but on a person? Was that even possible?

A faint chance. What if it did work? She and Harry could practice it and pull it off. After all, he was Harry Potter, the-boy-who-lived. She would use her knowledge of the spell to help Harry. Harry was powerful. He could do it. She believes in him.

They had to take this chance.

"I'll help you until you get it Harry." She told him reassuringly when they were in Transfigurtaion.

So practice they did but three days passed and there was absolutely no progress whatsoever. Harry was struggling to get it right, doing the best he could but nothing was happening.

"*Amoveo.*" He said again, for what seemed to be the hundredth time this day. They were in the Room for Requirement, practicing on removing a piece of paper inside a small bag.

"You need to concentrate more!" She said bossily. She was starting to get frustrated. They were running out of time. He's been at it for hours and the only result he got was a small corner of the paper, sticking out of the bag. "This isn't like the D.A. spells, it's different!"

"You try it then!" Harry said irritably. He sat down on a chair and crossed his arms. Annoyed from the lack of progress, she stood up, took a deep breath, conentrated hard and whispered,

"*Amoveo*."

The sheet of paper started to come out of the bag. Her eyes widened and she lowered her wand. The paper stopped. Half of it was inside the bag, the other half was sticking out.

"I did it?" She looked again to make sure she wasn't dreaming.

"That's amazing." Harry said from behind her.

"That was an accident." She said, dumbfounded.

"It makes sense! He trusts you!" said Harry as he examined the paper and the bag. "You'd get a clear shot if he's relaxed with you. Just take the stone off him and i'll take care of the rest."

"But-I" She looked at him in horror. "I can't do it, I'm not as powerful—"

"The removal spell would work better if you did it!" Harry interrupted, showing her the bag. "You've seen how I did it."

"But he's manipulative and cunning Harry." This was all wrong. She couldn't bare to face Malfoy after that little confrontation in the Three Broomsticks. She's been doing her best to avoid him. The Cruciatus Curse still fresh in her mind. "He makes me do things…"

"What things?" Harry said, his tone suddenly turning cold. "Did he hurt you? Did he touch —"

"No!" She couldn't keep it in anymore. She looked down at the floor in shame. "He tricked me into doing a Cruciatus Curse on him."

She wanted him to know the gravity of what she did, the guilt that she was feeling. She desperately wanted him to yell at her, to tell her what a sick, pathetic person she was becoming.

The guilt was eating her alive.

"I know what it feels like." His voice came out as an audible whisper.

"What? No! We were in a war then! You only did what you had to!" She buried her face in her hands. "I did it because I lost control of my emotions! I did it because, because…"

"You did it for Ron." Harry said quietly. "You did it for Ron, didn't you?"

She blinked back tears.

"I—"

The memories came to her in a fleeting instance, it made her remember what she was fighting for, why she was trying so hard to do this. Ron's death. Ron's last words echoed in her mind. *I love you guys.*

Harry was right.

All this time, she did it for Ron.

"I know what it feels like." Harry said again, his face was expressionless but she knew he was reminiscing a painful memory as well. "I did it when she killed Sirius. You don't have to explain yourself to me."

They didn't speak for what seemed like hours. She was afraid to face him, as if what he said wasn't meant for her ears. She didn't know if she should be relieved or scared.

But somehow it was nice to know that somebody understands.

Harry made it despite everything didn't he? Despite all else he still remained good? He was stronger than anyone gave him credit for.

Was she strong enough like him?

"Listen," Harry said finally, breaking the silence. "You practice alright? Make him lower his guard when he's with you and then do it. I know you can do it. Don't worry about the rest. I have your back."

The next few days were spent with her practicing the Removal spell. She first practiced on little objects and onto the bigger ones. The Room for Requirement was great help, changing into thicker and bigger objects everytime she improved.

It was on the eve of the Winter Masquerade that Hermione went to practice one last time. She went inside the Room for Requirement expecting to find her training room once more, but to her suprise it went back to the same, plain room she found when she first saw the book.

Curious, she grabbed the book from the table. A piece of parchment attached to it slipped to the floor. She picked it up. Her eyes widened.

Dear Miss Granger,

By the time you read this I'd have already passed on. I know that this may come as a shock to you but I know what happened to Draco Malfoy.

He was raised in a family of Dark Wizards who caged him, seeing as he was their only son. But while Narcissa and Lucius loved him dearly, they refused the idea of 'good' and kept Draco from turning into a person of good heart.

Draco was forced to be evil all his life, but unlike the others I saw a desire for him to become otherwise.

He considered this when he met you.

I observed him, how he watched you, Harry and Ron. I know he wanted to make friends, that he wanted a shot at being good.

He never killed me after all.

His parents offered him to Tom, and Tom told him about the Luteus stone. He knew that the boy was of pure blood and that he was capable of many things.

He taught Draco well, and amongst all things, he was confident of naming Draco his heir, a successor to his plans should he die. Now Draco lost his way in the dark.

I do not believe that there is no hope left for him.

I know you do not see him as a friend or an ally but please know that it is hard to love when the whole world is telling you not to.

A truth that Draco Malfoy knew all too well.

I trusted him then, I still trust him to this day.

Your departed friend,

Albus Dumbledore

P.S. If a Removal Spell doesn't work, a blood pact will.

The Great Hall was a Winter Wonderland. There were moving ice sculptures of different great wizards everywhere, some talking, some singing. The dance floor was charmed like a muggle skating rink, but the ice was non-slippery and it glistened in the light. The high ceiling looked as breath-taking as ever, showering the Hall with enchanted snowflakes that disappeared as it reached their heads. All was beautiful.

But she never liked the cold.

The plan was tonight. She wanted to wait until after today but Harry insisted they do it as soon as they can. A few Order members and Aurors were stationed around the castle grounds. They wanted to make sure Malfoy wouldn't escape. They wanted to arrest him on his very birthday.

Everyone looked unrecognizable and stunning in their masks. She clutched her white dress tightly, looking for any sign of platinum blonde hair or grey eyes.

Before she knew it, she felt someone's hands wrap around her waist. Her arms were on Harry's shoulders. She recognized his green orbs beneath the mask. He was smiling, telling her to relax a while.

She and Harry danced slowly, gently, and a feeling of warmth and happiness rushed over her. She felt so safe in his arms, despite the danger that she was going to be facing later tonight…

"I thought you didn't buy the dress!" She heard Ginny's voice as they came across her dancing with a boy Hermione couldn't recognize. Hermione grinned back weakly, remembering that the dress was just sent to her by a random stranger.

"Hermione?" She looked at the boy Ginny was dancing with. Blaise? 'Hermione I found you!' He rushed towards her, dragging Ginny with him. Harry blocked his path but Blaise ignored him. "He's planning something! He's going to force you to—"

A high-pitched scream suddenly errupted from the crowd.

Panicked, they looked for the source. Someone had just collapsed in the dance floor and people gathered around the unconscious body. Then not far from the scene, another person came crashing down, and another one, and another one.

"What's happening?" She looked in horror as red liquid started leaking from the collapsed bodies. There was blood everywhere but there was no sign that they have been stabbed. It was as though they just fell down and bled.

The sight of blood triggered everyone to hysteria. Panic arose as more people collapsed at random.

"I'll call the order!" yelled Harry through the frightened voices of the crowd. "Where is he?" He asked Blaise.

Before he could reply, they were separated by a couple of people who raced towards the double doors. She saw a few teachers shouting but she couldn't hear them. She struggled to escape the mad crowd.

"Harry!" She called out, but there was no sign of him. More people were screaming and collapsing. Everyone was running in different directions and a few people bumped into her hard once or twice. "Ginny! Harry!"

His platinum blonde hair made her stop in her tracks.

Amidst all the chaos, she finally spotted him. He was leaning casually against a doorframe near the table of the teachers, unnoticed by everyone else. A familiar condescending smirk graced his handsome features as he stared at the crowd. He looked pleased with himself, and he was enjoying everything, taking everything in. His black mask covered half his face but his dark demeanor gave his identity away.

Only Draco Malfoy was cold enough to be this calm, this *happy*, in times of such morbidity and horror…

How he knew who she was despite her white swan mask or sleek brown hair, she did not know. All she could see now was his intense gaze directed precisely towards her, its coldness sending shivers down her spine. He turned around and disappeared in the darkness.

She understood now, how he was killing all the Centaurs. He was testing this poison on them.

Anger took over her once more but she caught herself. She had to remain calm. She took her shoes off and pulled her dress to her arms. Struggling pass the crowd, she ran after him.

She passed doors, passed statues and armor knights until she couldn't hear the screams from the great hall anymore. She didn't know what she was going to do once she caught up to him. She wasn't even sure she was ready to face him yet. But her gut told her that she was going to be alright so she kept going. She stopped on a fork road, looked both ways and saw him round a corner. She followed without hesitation.

He climbed up the stairs. Then he turned his head back and smirked to make sure she was still following. He wasn't even running, just walking calmly in long strides, hands on his pockets.

She felt like she was playing a game of cat and mouse. Only she was the mouse chasing after the cat, and the cat had already set up a trap to devour her whole once this was all over. Once or twice he would look back and smirk, probably just to spite her. But she never let him unnerve her, never stopped running. It was now or never.

He was leading her to the Astronomy Tower.

Author's note :

sorry it took so long again. i had exams and i think i'm failing. :))

the next chapter has all the answers :) yup, next chapter's the final one…

aww… D:

i know it's weird and appalling to end this so soon, what with Draco still being evil and Hermione still hating him, but you just have to trust me :)

Oi! read and review! Let me know what you think :D

thanks hun!

The Final Chapter

This is the Final Chapter.

I'm nervous, aww shucks.

This ending will be overwhelming and *different*, just like my crazy plot noh? :) some of you might not even like it… but i encourage you to read on… read slowly, carefully, and take in every detail. :)

STOP WHEN YOUR EYES HURT. It's 15 pages long so it's not advisable to read it all in one sitting. But it's up to you though.

Please excuse my grammar, English is my second language, just reminding you :)

Disclaimers, yeah? I don't own anything, just this plot. Don't sue me.

Happy birthday, it's october 28 here :p

Okay, here we go :)

The moon was full, its dim light illuminated the place. The numerous magical objects and books were stacked and pushed to the walls and corners to make room for the center. The cold air pierced her skin but she was numb of this, of everything else. Everything but him.

He was standing in the middle, facing the large glass, window that almost looked like an arched door, it touched the floor and was almost tall enough to reach the ceiling. It overlooked the stars. She could see the silhouette of his back, his broad shoulders, his strong arms but his hands disappeared inside his pockets. "Ready?"

"I didn't come here for that." She said in a soft voice, as if not to disturb the silence.

"Yes you did." He turned his head back to look at her and she caught a glimpse of his masked handsome face before he stared at the stars again. "You're even wearing the wedding dress I gave you."

She clutched the dress tightly in her hand. Her eyes never left him. So this was a wedding dress? The weird symbol in the bottom of the box that came with it, the Malfoy Family Crest; she remembered it now. She saw it when she was researching about him and his family.

He probably charmed it so that it was the only dress she would want to wear.

Slowly she took a few steps forward but stopped when he started walking around her, in huge circles that covered the whole room. He was staring at the checkered floor as he did. Once, twice, three times. She was waiting. Harry said to wait for *the right moment*.

"All this scheming and planning, the only real purpose of it was to have you."

"You don't mean that."

"Are you still so dense or are you just denying the truth?" There was an unnerving tone of disapproval in his voice. He clicked his tongue in disappointment. "From the very start it was you, Granger. Remember when I pounded the hell out of Zabini? That was because he didn't want me to force you into marriage. Or when I snogged you senseless in front of everyone? I wanted them to know you were *mine*."

"I don't belong to anyone. Honestly, you're just confused—"

He laughed coldly at her, its harsh sound made her tremble. "I killed Weasley because he touched you. He died because of you."

"That's not — you're lying!" Anger boiled inside her, her ragged breaths could be heard from the silence.

Because of me?

She couldn't stop the hot tears from escaping her eyes, tried her best to keep him from seeing it. Already, she was showing signs of weakness. She rubbed her eyes roughly with her hands.

Ron wouldn't have wanted this.

"What about the lot in the Great Hall? What happens to them?" She said, clearly trying to change the subject.

"Ah, but this is my birthday and our wedding, darling." He smiled sadistically, still looking at the floor and walking in circles. "I wanted to celebrate."

She felt a sinking feeling in her stomach. His idea of a celebration was murder.

But Professor McGonagall would take care of them. There were Order members and Aurors stationed around Hogwarts. They wouldn't let those students die. She shouldn't worry, her job was to get the stone out of him.

"I don't think you understand the gravity of this..this is a bonding ritual." Her voice cracked and he noticed. He knew she was scared shitless. He knew she wanted to run.

And yet, here she was.

Bloody Gryffindors and their bravery.

The Malfoys were one of the pureblood families that needed to marry on the 18th year by an old bonding ritual. *Soul tied to another, heart as one.* No bond means no heir. "You're going to be bound to a *mudblood* forever. Your son won't be pure anymore, and your son's —"

"This is a really pathetic attempt to stop the unevitable." He said coldly and she met his eyes once more. She almost immediately fell silent. He had that effect on her;

He made her feel inferior and stupid, with just one gaze.

"Don't tell me what I already know. I chose to do this, I chose you."

"You can't," she started to walk towards him again, to stop him. He only pushed her back in the imaginary circle he was creating and kept walking.

"Don't you want to know the whole story, Granger?" He had one of those looks again, the one that infuriated her the most. It made her feel like he was laughing at her, or he knew something she didn't. She knew he was distracting her to keep her in the circle. A part of her was telling herself to get the hell out of there, but her curiosity got the best of her. She wanted to know.

Draco knew she would stay where she was. She was a smart and *brave* witch, but her thirst for knowledge was going to get her killed one day. He smirked at himself and continued. "Dumbledore predicted that Voldemort was going to give me the stone. He didn't know I already had it."

"You already had the stone when Dumbledore was still alive?"

"Yes. I never tried to kill him. You see, Voldemort told me to *pretend* to be a frightened little boy who was forced to kill him." He said.

"He gave you the stone and told you to pretend to kill Dumbledore?" Her eyes followed him wherever he went. She didn't let her guard down for a second. "Why would he want you to pretend?"

"He wanted to make me his heir, Granger, and he didn't want Dumbledore to know. He wanted Dumbledore to believe I was just a pawn."

So Dumbledore's letter was correct after all. Heir. Yes, it made sense. Why else would Voldemort give Malfoy the stone? Somehow Voldemort foresaw his own destruction, that's why he had a back up plan.

And if Malfoy was just pawn, Dumbledore wouldn't give him much thought.

"But it didn't work, did it? Dumbledore figured it out? That you were Voldemort's heir?"

She could almost feel the excitement coming from him. "I told him I was."

She looked back in disbelief.

"I lied to him, told him I didn't *want* to be the heir and that I was being *forced*. He made a huge mistake see… He *trusted* me." His eyes beamed, relishing the memory. "He told me to spy for him. He promised to help me remove the stone when Voldemort finally decides to use it on me, he never it was in me all along. I played him."

"What for? You already had the stone in your hands. You already knew Dumbledore was going to die. Why bother gaining his trust?"

She heard him click his tongue again, at her ignorance. "*Because,* Granger, dear old Voldie was going to fall, I knew it. I gained Dumbledore's trust so that when the war was over, I wouldn't be sent to Azkaban for being a Death Eater. I'd still be *free*."

"And Voldemort knew nothing about it? About Dumbledore trusting you?"

"Of course. Voldemort thought his plan worked, he thought Dumbledore didn't suspect I was heir. He never knew I became a spy for Dumbledore or that the very heir he named wanted to kill him for his self-proclaimed thrown. I played him too."

She didn't speak for a while. She was taking everything in.

He was enjoying every moment of it, telling her that his achievements were nothing short of brilliant. She didn't know what to think. All this time, it was him all along. He played both sides for his own selfish gains, and he got away with it too.

"There is no good side or bad side princess," His smirk widened. "just *my* side."

"What happened to you?" Her voice cracked again. Her face was sad and miserable. "You weren't always this empty, this cold."

"I was always like this, don't tell me I'm any different." He said. 'Everyone thought so. Even my own parents, thought I was a monster. Me, their own son.' There was no trace of sadness or regret in his voice, just eagerness. "So I asked Voldemort to kill them."

No. She gasped at his words. His lack of remorse was so frightening, so hard to imagine, that she had to let her guard down and momentarily look away.

…*but please know that it is hard to love when the whole world is telling you not to.*

Dumbledore had been right all along. Malfoy was a monster because the people around him made him that way. His whole world had been built with so much hatred and darkness that he seemed be ignorant of feeling and loving.

…*Draco lost his way in the dark.*

His cold laughter interrupted her thoughts. He brushed his hand through his hair. "Look at me now Hermione, I have what everyone desires to have, what everyone can only dream about… more power. And after this night is over, I'll have you."

"You won't." She grimaced. "Dumbledore didn't trust you completely. He said you lost your way in the dark, he told me in that letter."

"A letter from Dumbledore?" He snorted. "He's dead."

"It was his last attempt to warn me. He wrote it before he died." She musn't let him frighten her, musn't let him take control. *You can do this, Hermione. You can do this.* "He saw the darkness in your eyes Malfoy, but you're not going to do this, I know it. You know what else he said in that letter? He said that there was still hope left for you. He still believed you're going to change. Despite everything, he still believed in you."

"Dumbledore was a fool." He said indifferently and his face darkened. "He shouldn't have trusted in me, in anyone. Trust destroys you. He and the Dark Lord were proof of that."

He made an abrupt stop. Then he walked towards her, his footsteps getting louder and louder. Her heart raced at the sound. Then finally, he was facing her full on. His figure towered over her once again and she felt like she was seeing him for the first time. There was no denying he was handsome; his blonde hair was flawless, his black mask looked brilliant in his aristocratic face and his dress robes made him look like a god.

He was perfection.

She was tempted to back away at the sight of his intense grey orbs, but when he brushed her cheek with his hand, his touch made her legs weak. Slowly he moved to untie her mask. He was so gentle, so cautious, that she couldn't find the strength to pull away.

"But I do too." Her voice was soft and mild, and he found himself relaxing at the sound.

"What?" He whispered faintly.

"Believe in you."

Draco looked at the girl in front of him in amazement. He wanted nothing more than to plant sweet kisses in her lips. He felt a small tinge of regret in his stomach. Then there was… *doubt*? Doubt about going with the plan? Doubt about this marraige?

18 circles, Hermione was counting. His face held no expression, no movement. He didn't even blink. They just stood there for a long time, facing each other. She was looking for any sign in his eyes, anything that might tell her that he changed his mind, but it suddenly flashed anger and she backed away,

"Enough of this."

"He believed in you, Malfoy!" She said loudly as he moved to grab her arm. He started pulling her in the middle of his imaginary circle but she struggled. "So much that he was willing to overlook the evil in you! Doesn't that say something? Doesn't that mean there is actually good —"

"This is exactly the kind of thing I *warned* you about, princess." His tone was harsh and his grip tightened against her struggles. He was losing his temper. "I told you not to be vulnera—"

"I saw it too! I saw *you*!" Her voice was getting louder, she was desperately trying to make him understand. "Forget about what everyone said! I believe in you! You're still there somewhere! I know you a—"

"*Confringo*!" Malfoy pushed her to the floor the same moment she heard the voice. The Blasting curse almost hit her, but Malfoy shoved her out of the way and it hit him instead. He crashed to a bookshelf, dust and smoke everywhere.

"Hermione!" Hands started to pull her up. "I'm sorry I was aiming it at—are you alright?"

She didn't have time to answer because Malfoy was starting to get up again. Harry sent another curse at him and he crashed into the shelf again.

"Do it now!" Harry yelled at her. She grabbed her wand,

"*Amoveo*!"

White sparks from her wand hit his body. She took a deep breath and concentrated hard. She heard Malfoy groan and roll on his stomach but she never lowered her wand. She directed all her magic towards him when he tried to get up. He fell down again. A few minutes passed and he wasn't moving anymore.

Then she screamed as her wand burned her fingers. She dropped it immediately, white sparks vanishing.

Then silence.

Harry looked at her then at her wand. They couldn't see Malfoy's body in the dark and the dust. "Did it work?"

She moved forward to check but Harry stopped her. They couldn't see any movement, couldn't hear any sounds.

She was tempted to sigh in relief for a while, until she heard a faint, sadistic laugh that made her skin crawl.

"The Removal Spell?" His menacing voice came from the dark, she could tell he was mad again. "Impressive. Too bad it doesn't work."

Almost immediately Harry pointed his wand at her. She didn't have time to react as a spell hit her hard, the impact causing her to crash on top of one of the desks that was pushed against the wall. Protective charms surrounded her in an instant and she was trapped.

"What do you think you're doing?" She said in outrage as she pounded the transparent shield with her fists.

"I'm sorry Hermione!" Harry wasn't looking at her anymore; he wasn't sorry at all.

Numerous sparks started to come out of the dust and debris. Harry sheilded himself and sent more hexes back. She wanted to help him but she was completely trapped.

"Harry! Let me help!" She screamed.

Malfoy was on his feet again. He looked like an angel of death about to kill, ever so diabolic and handsome at the same time. The curses and hexes he was sending outnumbered Harry's by millions. Harry was having a hard time avoiding the attacks.

She watched the scene helplessly, unable to do anything. Harry sent as many curses as he could, ducked at the few darker ones coming at him. Malfoy had his hands in his pockets again as he gracefully avoided Harry's curses.

What annoyed Hermione most, however, was the slightly bored look on his face.

"*Sectusempra!*" Harry shouted.

The curse came close to hitting him, passing by an inch from his head and cutting his mask off in the process. His face twisted into another cold, demented smirk and he waved his hand sideways in a whip-like manner, so fast that Harry didn't have time to avoid it. His curse hit Harry square in the chest and sent him flying to the wall. Glasses shattered and objects smashed as Harry fell on them.

"Harry!"

He didn't move.

Malfoy waved his hand again and Harry was screaming and squirming. He was clutching his head and pulling his hair.

"No! No! I don't want this! Make it stop!"

"Harry!" She pounded the shield with her fists harder and she was sure she fractured her wrists but she didn't care.

Malfoy was walking towards her now, a triumphant gleam on his face. He tried to get rid of the protective charms Harry placed around her but they didn't budge. He cursed under his

breath.

"Fascinating spell, isn't it?" He was walking around the sheild, ignoring Harry's screams of agony. "It's a fear spell, Timor. It makes you see things you fear the most. I got it from Dark Arts, Beauty and Power."

"Fuck you, you bastard!"

"You will after we get married princess."

The protective charms around her disappeared. She struggled as he half dragged, half carried her to the middle of the room.

"*Obstringo.*" He said. Fire started to blaze from the invisible circle, enclosing them in both. She didn't know what to do. He was holding her hands tight, preventing any means of escape, she didn't even have her wand. Harry was still screaming.

The door burst open and Malfoy waved his hand again. She could see Blaise, Ginny and Order Members outside but they couldn't get in. Their mouths were moving but she couldn't hear them. She cried in pain. Her arm was burning. It was starting. She struggled from his grasp.

"What magic has bound togother, no man can undo—"

"Stop! Please!"

"—I bind my heart and soul to you."

She screamed as she felt like an invisible blade was cutting her arm open. She saw his blood and hers… lots of it… in her hands, on the floor, and all over her white dress. All over him. She could taste its metallic tang in her mouth and feel its sticky dampness in her skin. She was crying, her vision was blurred wet. And those stormy grey eyes… *she dreamt about this before.* A twisted looking M was forming in her skin and in his.

"Come on, say it!" He commanded, his voice echoing in the room. His grip on her hand tightened more. Everything Dumbledore said was suddenly clear.

"Take that spell off him!" She yelled.

He growled in anger but with a slight wave of his hand the spell was gone. Harry wasn't screaming anymore. Malfoy shouted for her to continue. She looked down in defeat and forced her lips to move.

"W-what magic has b-bound together,"

"Hermione no!" She heard Harry's distant cry somewhere in the room.

"N-no man can undo…"

"HERMIONE!" Harry looked hysterical and desperate when she met his eyes. He was still unmoving, but he was desperately trying to get up. She blinked back tears, mouthed an "I'm sorry" and looked back at Malfoy.

"…I bind my heart and soul to you."

Then the fire around them blazed into the ceilings. It covered them from everyone else. She couldn't see Harry or the others anymore.

Their arms entwined, their lips met, and she felt the magic rush between them. It felt so unreal. The kiss wasn't horrible like what she expected it to be. It was a warm, refreshing feeling, unlike any other feeling she had ever felt before. And then everything went still and quiet, reminding her of a slow-motion muggle movie scene. She could just feel him, his closeness, his demanding presence, his touch. She felt him smile against her lips. And when she caught a glimpse of his eyes,

…It was as if the whole world held its breath.

The magic was enticing. She knew she was stronger, more powerful as it rushed in her veins, because at that very moment, they were one. The right moment. She wasted no time. She took a deep breath, concentrated hard and,

"*Amoveo.*"

White sparks emitted from their entwined, bleeding arms. It consumed them, forced both magic and power out of their bodies. And just as quickly as the magic rushed into her, it was sucked out of her and she weakened. For the first time in her life, she saw fear in Malfoy's eyes. Their arms burned as they held on to each other.

Then the magic exploded into a blinding light, separated them both into the other ends of the circle. The flames that surrounded them disappeared. She was lying on her stomach and her cheek was on the floor. She felt a sting on her arm.

The Luteus stone floated in the center for a short while until it fell down and shattered into tiny pieces, forever scattered, forever lost.

It was over?

"Hermione!" Harry was still unmoving a few feet away from her. Time seemed to have resumed its pace and they were back to reality once more.

She raised her hand slightly to tell him she was alright. She caught a glimpse of Malfoy's unconscious body on the other end…

It was over.

She could finallly…

A loud bang came from the entrance causing her to spring back to consciousness. Her eyes darted towards it. The Order members, Blaise and Ginny were trying their best to remove the barrier on the door.

The barrier?

Wasn't it suppose to have gone by now?

No. She looked in horror as Malfoy began to stir back to consciousness, but surely he was powerless now? The stone was already out of him.

Slowly, he heaved himself and stood up. He wasn't smirking anymore, and there was something in his eyes that made her want to look away.

Then a mistake; they forgot one, tiny, obvious detail that might very well cause their whole destruction,

He still had his wand.

Panicking, she tried to get up. But everytime she tried to move, dark spots appeared in her eyes. He started to limp towards her but something made him stop in his tracks.

"No! Stop Malfoy!" She yelled when she realized what he was doing. She groped the floor and crawled towards him in desperation. The damage that the Removal spell caused was too much for her body to handle and her body threatened to fall to unconsciousness again.

It's been a while since Draco used his wand and now it was for the soul purpose of killing the blasted Chosen One who he had hated so much over the years. Divide and Conquer was possible after all.

Who cares about the bloody stone? He already had *her*. He didn't need anything else.

"Please!" She was hysterical. She had to do something… *anything* to stop this.

He pointed his wand at Harry. "*Avada Ked—*"

"DRACO!"

Thump.

He stopped midway. He felt something… something pounding inside him. *What is this?* He clutched his chest tightly, to make sure he wasn't imagining it.

"Draco don't do it! Please!"

Thump. thump. thump.

Was this… her *heart?*

He felt the blood boil inside him, a heart? What is this madness? He had no heart. He was a monster, he wasn't like them. He was…

He lowered his wand and clutched his chest tighter. Mesmerized and confused about what was happening, it was still there. He felt it throb, stronger than ever. Was it because of the marraige? Was it because the one who caused him to feel so much was already bound to him by heart and soul?

Souls tied together, heart as one, yeah?

So Blaise was wrong after all. He-he has a heart now?

Hers and mine?

Ours?

All this time he believed he was… Everything he ever fought… Everyone was wrong… He… He wasn't a monster anymore and…

She believed in him from the very beginning.

He rubbed his hands through his hair and took a few steps backward. The whole world changed before his eyes. This wasn't what he believed in, this wasn't how he saw himself. This was different. He wasn't suppose to feel. He wasn't suppose to be *human*…

"Say it again."

"*Draco*."

He ran to the towering, door-like window and pushed it open, letting in a gush of cold wind that pierced her skin. He turned his head back and looked at her one last time, muttered something that only she could hear.

Then hands on his pockets once more, facing the stars and the full moon,

He jumped.

Some say he died from the height of the jump, his body buried somewhere in the Forbidden Forest by the centaurs who wanted their revenge. Some say he survived and was injured by the fall, healing somewhere in the Philippine islands and planning to take Harry Potter down when the time comes.

She was the only one who knew he got away, *harmless.*

The Daily Prophet came out with a picture of Harry and Hermione that day. The boy-who-lived and his bestfriend, once again saving the day. The issue itself was vague and short, stating the deaths of 18 people who died of poison during the ball. Harry having stopped the murderer of one Draco Malfoy.

How brave they all were.

Only a few knew about the unbelievable power Draco Malfoy had exhibited that night. None even mentioned how he was bound to Hermione Granger by an old marriage ritual. Only the members of the Order and a few Aurors saw how he dropped his wand and walked away when he had Harry Potter at wandpoint. Yes, only a few people knew the truth.

Hermione Granger lived in the heart of Godric's Hollow after the Winter Masquerade Massacre.

Harry would visit every thursday and they would watch old movies and fall asleep on the couch everytime. Sometimes, She would babysit little Ronald and Katie Zabini and read them stories of charming princes and castles and happy endings still. Even though she knew they didn't exist and one cannot truly live happily ever after, because it was better to have false hope, than no hope at all,

because she must sleep with the lights on just to forget his haunting grey eyes,

because her whole being trembles from so much beauty,

because in the end, she will never be alone again,

because in the end, they were one,

because that was how he loved.

Hands stretched to the fire,

Burned, hurt, but still reaching out to her,

Just to feel her warmth.

He was alive somewhere, this she knew. She could feel him in her blood. The crest will mark her arm forever, a reminder of the bond they shared in marriage, and one day he'll come back. Because he made a promise before he jumped off to the night sky. When he looked back and gazed at her one last time.

When he actually *smiled*. Draco.

When his voice resounded in her head again and again.

"I'll be back for you…"

FIN.

Dear amazing Reader,

Well! It's finally over. No more crazy plot twists, no more weird stones, removal spells, and ROSE-SCENT ACTIVATED POISONS (wtf :D). No more evil Draco. Aww. Damn, I'm going to miss writing this D: I'm going to miss you too!

Any questions you want to ask? State in a review. I will answer them :)

Want to flame because you hated the ending? State in a review. I can't say I'll like them but I'll still consider them :)

Want to show some love? Go on! I really appreiate it :D

Thanks for staying with me until the very end.

xoxo Yen.

I just made a sequel to this story . Care to read that too? click my page then :)